THE ACCUSED Michael Jackson arrives in a California court. *(Story on Page A10.)*

■ News / A2

Another bank in hot water for P8-B scam

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Karen, Ces deny spreading rumor Lucy Torres a 'klepto'

■ 2bU! / D1

4 easy steps to win Big Valentine Blowout

Tanong ng Bayan / A14

RP media: Nagkulang ba sa good news?

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No more 'Little Mister and Miss Kuliglig' contests

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

NO MORE "Little Mister and Miss Kuliglig," no more Best in *Tinikling* and no more camping in Makiling. At least, not during school days.

NO MORE/ A18

WALA NANG LAKWATSA?!

Peso breaks into 54 level

US fund to keep on investing in country

By Doris C. Dumlao and Michelle V. Remo

THE PESO yesterday broke into the 54 level against the US dollar for the first time since October 2003 on a string of favorable news such as the 6.1-percent economic growth last year and the country's fresh chance to stay on the list of investment sites of the biggest US pension fund.

The peso was the sole gainer in Asia as expectations the G7 will once again issue a dull, familiar message calling for global currency flexibility weighed on regional currencies.

The peso surged to a 15-month high of 54.87 before closing at 55 against the greenback.

It opened at 55.03 and hit an intra-day low of 55.04 before breaching the 55 barrier.

"When the 55:$1 level was breached, it triggered further selling of dollars on expectation that it will appreciate some more," said Jonathan Ravelas, chief market strategist at Banco de Oro Universal Bank.

The $454.5-million volume at the Philippine Dealing System yesterday was one of the highest seen in the aftermath of the 1997 Asian currency turmoil.

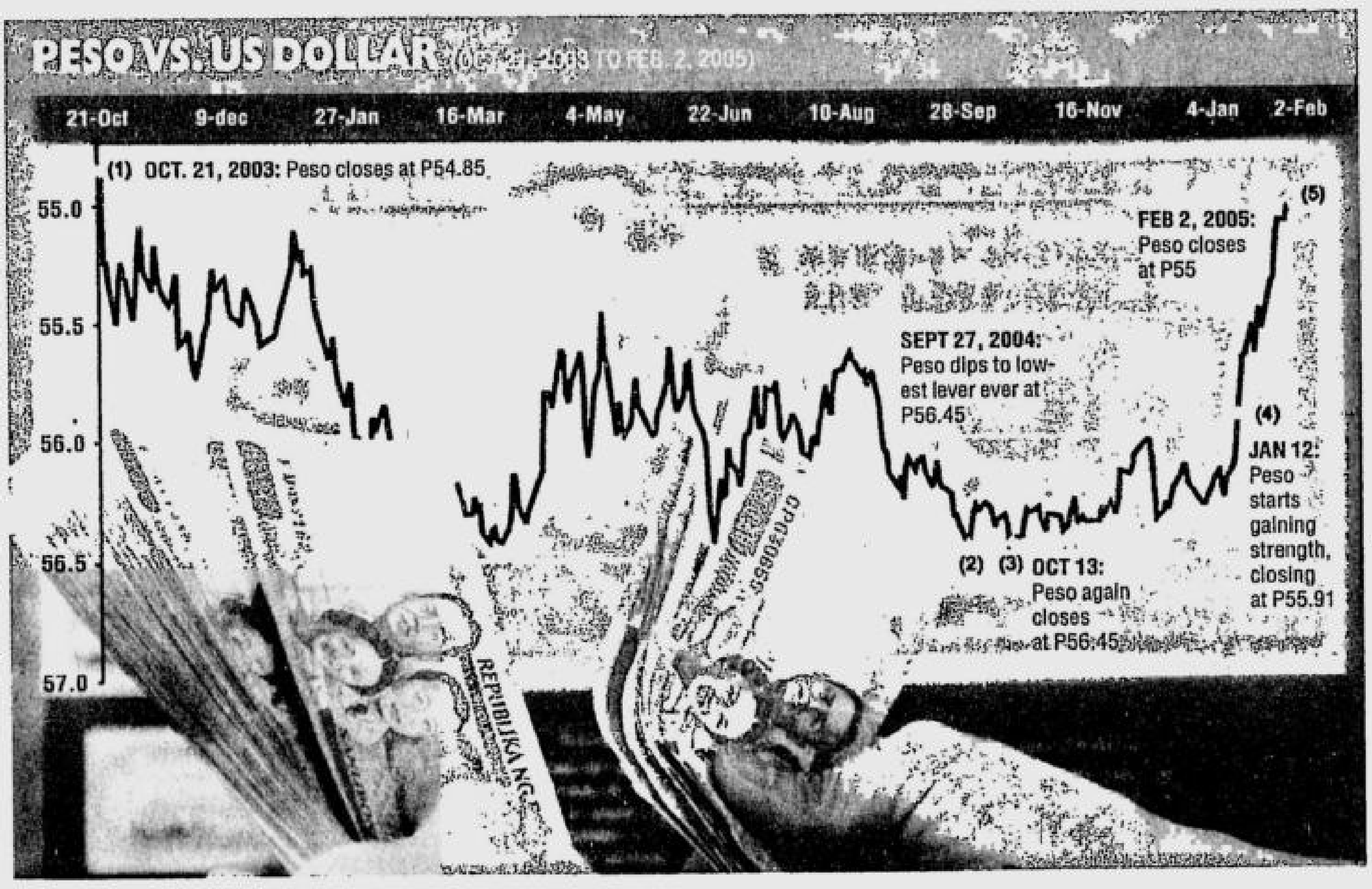
Upon closing at 55 to the dollar, the local currency gained 9 centavos despite some technical correction.

"The uptrend is still due to equity flows. The sentiment seems to be improving due to the recent tax measures being passed, the favorable economic data, gross international reserves and OFW

PESO BREAKS/ A18

EDWIN BACASMAS

AGENDA FOR PEACE. President Arroyo convenes the National Security Council on Tuesday to tackle the peace talks with the MILF set to start this month in Kuala Lumpur. The President is flanked by, from left, NSC Deputy retired Gen. Victor Mayo, Presidential Adviser on Mindanao Affairs Dureza, Executive Secretary Ermita, National Security Adviser Ebdane and Justice Secretary Gonzalez.



THE UP and down saga of the Philippine peso over a period of 15 months.

SOURCE: TECHNISTOCK/PDI RESEARCH/INQGRAPH, M.RUBIO

Solons want IPPs, lawyers, docs to pay VAT

By Cynthia D. Balana, Juliet Labog-Javellana and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

A POWERFUL congressional body yesterday lowered the boom on the earnings of doctors, lawyers and independent power producers.

In a four-hour executive session, the House committee on ways and means agreed to slap them with the proposed 12-percent value-added tax, removing their previous exemptions, in order to raise P15.3 billion in new money for the government.

The committee also lifted the exemption previously given to the sale and importation of raw materials used in the manufacture of petroleum products.

The committee action is still subject to plenary debates and voting before the House version is transmitted to the Senate.

SOLONS/ A18

Critics to GMA: What growth? Growth for whom?

NOT EVERYONE is ecstatic over the 6.1-percent growth in the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2004.

It's like "a balloon that will eventually burst," Rep. Rafael Mariano of the militant party-list group Anakpawis said yesterday.

He said the economic growth's foundation was "very weak" because it was based, not on production, but largely on telecommunications—mainly call centers and mobile phone services—massive election spending, and the remittances of overseas Filipino workers.

Mariano also said the agriculture and industry sectors remained backward because of the prevailing export-oriented and import-dependent character and orientation of the economy.

Renato Reyes Jr., secretary general of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, pointed out that the benefits of the increased GDP had yet to reach the poor: "There's another side to the rosy economic picture painted by the administration. *Malayo talaga sa bituka ang sinasabi nilang pag-unlad* (The purported growth rate is far from addressing the gut issues)."

The National Statistics Coordination Board (NSCB) had said the GDP growth last year was the fastest since the 6.2-percent expansion in 1989, and well above the 4.7 percent recorded in 2003.

CRITICS/ A18

It's final: SC upholds Mining Act

By Philip C. Tubeza

HAPPY days are here again for the mining magnates.

The Supreme Court yesterday denied "with finality" a motion asking the tribunal to reverse its ruling last December allowing foreign mining firms to exploit the country's natural resources.

The high court said the La Bugal-B'laan Tribal Association and other groups failed to raise new issues in the motion for reconsideration that they filed on Jan. 20.

"After a thorough deliberation on

IT'S FINAL/ A4

Repentant tree cutter, 7 other witnesses vs loggers

By Volt Contreras and Juliet Labog-Javellana

A REPENTANT tree cutter who lost his three children and parents-in-law to the killer floods that hit Aurora last December has agreed to go to "war" beside Environment Secretary Michael Defensor.

Under mounting pressure to go after big-time illegal loggers, Defensor will bank on Renato Ritual and seven other "eyewitnesses" when the Department of Environment and Natural Resources files charges today against some 40 persons, including businessmen and barangay officials.

Among the witnesses, Defensor took special note of Ritual who, in his affidavit, recalled in Filipino: "Because of the calamity, I lost my three children and my parents-in-law. They were swept away by the floods and have not been found since."

The charges will be for violation of Presidential Decree No. 705, or the Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines, in the towns of General Nakar and Infanta in Quezon. A bailable offense, illegal logging carries a penalty of 6-20 years imprisonment, plus fines, depending on the value of the wood seized.

Defensor yesterday announced at a press conference that the DENR had secured eight affi

REPENTANT/ A6

Governors angry, gang up on Miriam

By PDI Mindanao and Southern Luzon Bureaus

A MISGUIDED missile. Poor staff work. Out of premise. The problem lies with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Diversionary tactic for the proposed increase in the value-added tax.

These were just some of the angry reactions to Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago's privilege speech on Monday assailing top local officials for supposedly doing nothing to stop illegal logging in their provinces.

South Cotabato Gov. Daisy

GOVERNORS/ A6

Police chief rattles skeletons in media closets

By Christian V. Esguerra

A PROVINCIAL police chief who allegedly once blurted out an urge to kill journalists yesterday suggested that some reporters were on the take and called on media to clean out skeletons from their closets.

"Here, they think they are king. What they want, they always get," Camarines Norte police director Senior Supt. Efren Yebra said in a phone interview from his headquarters in Daet.

"Word here is while corrupt cops victimize drivers, cops get victimized by corrupt reporters."

Yebra urged media groups like the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) to police their own ranks and "educate" journalists to keep them off illegal activities.

Corruption and involvement in shady activities may be a key reason some media people get harmed or killed, Yebra charged.

"Some reporters might not like the idea but many of them really need to be reminded of their code of ethics," he said.

NUJP president Inday Espina-Varona said professionalizing the media was exactly what her organization was doing.

"We're going around the country conducting seminars for media practitioners. Part of the semi

POLICE/ A6

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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers.
SOURCE: PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	**Iloilo/Bacolod**	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	**Roxas**	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	**Cebu**	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	**Tacloban**	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	**Gen. Santos**	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	**Zamboanga**	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	**Cagayan de Oro**	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	**Davao**	Cloudy with Rains

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/02/02/05

Defensor rapped over watershed resort

By Armand N. Nocum

A CONCERNED citizen has filed a graft case against Environment Secretary Michael Defensor for his alleged failure to implement an order evicting a private individual from the Marikina Watershed Reservation and dismantling the "resort" the latter had illegally erected there.

In a three-page complaint, Wilfredo Tuanqui, of Greenland Village, Rosario, Pasig, said the structure built by Felix Marinas had altered the terrain of the land in the water reservation, resulting in flooding in Metro Manila.

"Marinas built a resort in the Marikina watershed that caused flood(ing) in Metro Manila," said Tuanqui in his complaint dated Jan. 27.

Tuanqui faulted Defensor for failing to implement a "notice to vacate" issued by Oscar Ferrer, head of the Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO) based in Antipolo in February 2004.

Addressed to Marinas, the notice said that after investigation by the DENR, it was found that the "development and infrastructures" Marinas undertook on a lot in Cabading, San Jose, Antipolo "encroaches the Marikina Watershed Reservation."

"In view of the above, you are hereby instructed to vacate the area and dismantle all the improvements introduced therein within 15 days of receipt hereof," read Ferrer's February 2004 order.

According to Tuanqui, the order was never implemented, prompting him to write Defensor—through his lawyer Oliver Lozano—on Jan. 19 to "immediately implement the notice to vacate" issued by Ferrer.

But no order came, he said.

Speaking through an aide, Defensor said he had issued a memorandum ordering the dismantling of the illegal structure on Jan. 25.

The INQUIRER called and sent text messages to Defensor, but it was his head executive assistant Beth Medrano who replied, saying Defensor was in a closed-door meeting in Malacañang.

Another bank in hot water for ₱8-B scam

By Doris C. Dumlao

STANDARD Chartered Bank, the oldest foreign bank in the country, was yesterday accused by Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile of defrauding "almost a thousand" local investors through the alleged sale of P8 billion in unregistered securities.

In a privilege speech at the Senate, Enrile also called for the probe and prosecution of government officials who he said allegedly coddled the British-based bank, which he also accused of cheating the government of about P500 million in unpaid taxes.

One of the government officials that Enrile identified was the former acting justice secretary, Merceditas Gutierrez, now presidential legal counsel and chair of the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission, whom he accused of facilitating the exit from the country of a Standard Chartered executive who was facing a criminal case here in connection with the bank's sale of the unregistered securities.

"It seems that this bank has no respect for our laws or the institutions that we have created to implement our laws and safeguard our people... it also seems that our institutions lack either the will or power and have not served our purposes, and remedial legislation may be necessary to solve this problem," said Enrile, who is vice chair of the committee on banks and financial institutions.

Unregistered securities

The unregistered securities that Standard Chartered allegedly sold were high-risk foreign mutual funds, "falsely advertised and marketed as safe investment haven for our foreign residents and local nationals," claimed Enrile.

The senator cited a list of prominent people to whom Standard had allegedly sold the trust instruments and would soon be summoned to testify.

They included incoming Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima, who reportedly invested $40,000 and Washington Sycip, founder of Sycip Gorres Velayo & Co. auditing firm which both Sycip and Purisima chaired at different times.

Other alleged victims were former interior secretary Luis Santos, a former mayor of Davao City, who reportedly invested P374,000, and the Claret School and Ateneo de Manila which reportedly invested their pension funds.

The most detailed case cited by Enrile was that of lawyer Mark Bocobo, a grandson of the late Jorge Bocobo, the legal scholar and former dean of the University of the Philippines College of Law. Bocobo said he lost $100,000 in trust placements which he had placed with Standard Chartered in January 2000.

High-risk investments

"Contrary to Standard Chartered Bank's representations that the funds they marketed were a safe haven, it turned out that they were high-risk investments which were heavily placed in 'technology stocks' and other stocks in the United States and Europe, which by that time had already been declining," Bocobo said in a letter to Enrile.

"This is contrary to the bank's proposal to me that the foreign mutual funds were heavy-weighting on long-term government securities (FXTNs)" or "whose underlying investments are government securities and prime commercial loans," Bocobo said.

Enrile accused the British bank of violating Republic Act 7721, which had liberalized the entry and scope of operations of foreign banks in the country.

Reynaldo Geronimo, counsel of Standard Chartered, yesterday released this short statement on Enrile's speech: "This is not a new issue and has been raised in a number of arenas over the last two years, where Standard Chartered Bank has been found with no wrongdoing. However, I am not aware of any case filed against the bank by Atty. Mark R. Bocobo, a seasoned investor.

"Standard Chartered Bank is the oldest foreign bank in the Philippines, stretching back more than 132 years and as such, continues to observe Philippine laws and regulations," he said.

Since 1873

Standard Chartered has been in the country since 1873 when it opened for business as the Chartered Bank. Standard Chartered resulted from the merger in 1969 of the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China and the Standard Bank of British South Africa.

Enrile said the bank had started selling the foreign securities in 1996, packaged as a "Global Third Party Mutual Fund" and which were not registered with the SEC.

Enrile said the Romulo Mabanta Buenaventura Sayoc & Delos Angeles law firm, which had aided the bank in this operation, should also be investigated.

Enrile said lawyer Francisco Chavez, a former solicitor general, had filed a criminal case of swindling against the bank's board members and officers in June 2003, but nothing came of it.

"Instead, almost all the persons charged, many of whom are non-resident foreigners, have left the country, while the criminal case was pending against them," he said, and accused Gutierrez of being one of the officials who had a hand in this.

Gutierrez appeared unnerved when she faced Malacañang reporters yesterday to deny Enrile's charges.

'Wrong information'

"I don't know where Senator Enrile got his wrong information. But I'm not taking what he said it against him. I'm willing to talk to him," said Gutierrez, her eyes tearing and her voice cracking.

She explained that it was former Justice Secretary Simeon Datumanong who had issued and later lifted the hold departure order.

Gutierrez said she merely allowed the Standard Chartered executives to leave for Singapore in 2003 despite the HDO to attend a "very important meeting of chief operating officers," a decision that she made with the concurrence of the chief state prosecutor and assurances that the bank executives would return.

She said the Standard Chartered executives returned after the seminar but that she had no way of knowing if they were still in the country.

Gutierrez said she was all for "justice being served" in the case.

In an interview, Chavez said said he believed former justice undersecretary Manuel Teehankee, who is now in Geneva as the country's representative to the World Trade Organization, should also be summoned to explain. Teehankee is a former partner of the Romulo Mabanta law office. *With reports from Michael Lim Ubac and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

A MESSAGE TO OUR CONSUMERS - PART 6

COPW SUPPORTS THE SENATE VERSION OF THE VAT

The growing consensus in the Senate Ways and Means Committee is that we must:
- Expand the VAT
- Adopt a multi-tiered VAT rate to protect the poor
- Remove ALL VAT exemptions
- Plug the 40% VAT leakages and non payment of taxes, the thrust of the Senate.

The Consumer & Oil Price Watch (COPW) supports the position of the Senate and has been invited as well to all hearings on the VAT.

THE 10% VAT ON PRIME COMMODITIES WILL NOT BE INCREASED
- These prime commodities are sardines, corned beef, sugar, instant noodles, milk, coffee, soap, detergent bar, flour, patis, vinegar, and soy sauce.
- The VAT on upper-end restaurants in hotels and shopping malls will be increased to 12%.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS IN THEIR ORIGINAL STATE SHOULD BE SUBJECT TO 1% VAT AND NOT ZERO

A 1% VAT will be imposed but a presumptive tax of 1% will be granted so the net effect is that producers of rice, fish, beef and pork, vegetables and fruits will NOT pay VAT.

Congress and the DOF will define what constitutes backyard farming. ONLY commercial growers will be covered by VAT registration.

PROCESSED AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS SHOULD BE SUBJECT TO 5% VAT AND NOT ZERO

A 5% VAT should be imposed on processed agricultural products like dressed chicken and brown sugar which have undergone processing but are still considered in their original state.

The commercial producers and the BIR should determine the input tax credit that producers can deduct once the VAT exemption is lifted.

The COPW will request the Secretary of Agriculture for a dialogue with the agricultural sector to explain our position.

PROFESSIONALS LIKE DOCTORS AND LAWYERS SHOULD NOT BE EXEMPTED AND MUST PAY 5% VAT

VAT ON PETROLEUM PRODUCTS

We are amenable to the compromise solution of Senator Ralph Recto that the proposed increase in the specific tax (excise) on diesel will be offset by the VAT increase PROVIDED the DOF and the oil companies will simulate the cost per liter before VAT and with VAT. Also, there should be NO price increase to the transport sector and the consuming public using diesel.

VAT ON POWER

The COPW is against a VAT on power as this will be an added burden to the consuming public.

However, we may consider a VAT of 2% on power to put ALL sectors in the VAT system which will translate into a P14.00 a month for 40% of MERALCO end-users who consume 100 KWH per month. The increase in electricity rates due to VAT must be simulated by the Department of Energy.

GENERATING POWER PLANTS MUST PAY CORPORATE INCOME TAX

All power generating plants should be subject to corporate income tax. Since they are getting a guaranteed Return on Rate Base approved by the ERC, they should pay income tax on their profits.

ACTION TAKEN ON VAT LEAKAGES AND NON-PAYMENT OF TAXES

1. After 19 years, the President has mustered the political will to require borrowers to submit to the banks their audited financial statements filed with the BIR together with their Income Tax Return (ITR) as a precondition to extending loans to borrowers.

   Moreover, the borrower is now required to waive the confidentiality of its books and to allow banks to conduct random verification with the BIR. This CB Circular was signed by the BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura on January 26, 2005.
2. BENCHMARKING. The BIR, Customs, and the DOF will work closely with the industry sub sectors, trading and services to establish the total input tax credit allowed to be deducted against their output VAT.
3. We are optimistic that incoming Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima, who brings integrity and credibility to his team in the BIR and Customs, will change the image of the institution.

WE REITERATE OUR COMMITMENT TO THE PUBLIC THAT WE WILL ENSURE THE EFFECT OF THE VAT WILL NOT GREATLY IMPACT THE CONSUMERS, ESPECIALLY THE POOR.

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Bishops support curbs on Japayukis

By Blanche S. Rivera

BRAVING the wrath of spurned entertainers, Filipino bishops yesterday came out in support of Japan's new immigration law that would severely limit the number of overseas performing artists who would be allowed to enter that country.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines assured Japanese immigration officials of its support in a meeting before the CBCP plenary assembly that concluded on Jan. 23.

The four Japanese officials explained the new law and presented an "action plan" for the Philippine Catholic Church to follow with regard to it.

The CBCP said the stricter law to be implemented this year would be highly effective against the trafficking of Filipino women who end up as sex workers in Japan.

There are some 80,000 Filipino entertainers currently in Japan. Together, they send home some P1 billion annually.

The Philippines, meanwhile, made a final appeal to Japan on Tuesday to delay the new visa rule on entertainers.

The government's Office of External Affairs called for a two-and-a-half year transition period to allow Filipino artists who want to work in Japan to adjust to the new rule.

Manila had earlier asked Tokyo for a five-year postponement. But Masaru Watanabe, minister for general affairs at the Japanese Embassy in Manila, last week said guidelines on the new visa policy had been approved and would be implemented "very soon." *With an AP report*

Malaysia extends amnesty for Pinoy illegals

By Jerome Aning, Carlito Pablo and TJ Burgonio

THE MALAYSIAN immigration authorities have extended for another week its amnesty period for illegal aliens, giving the Philippine government more time to repatriate some 170,000 undocumented Filipinos who remain there.

Labor Undersecretary Manuel Imson yesterday said Kuala Lumpur agreed to postpone the looming crackdown on illegal aliens upon Manila's request, which was relayed by Philippine Embassy officials.

The official appealed to the illegally-staying Filipinos, particularly those in Sabah, Malaysia, to get travel documents and return to the Philippines before Feb. 8.

"We believe that we already have a sizeable number of undocumented workers there so we are proceeding with the repatriation program for the purpose of documenting them," he told reporters.

Imson said that those who would voluntarily return home will be allowed to go back to Malaysia after they are given proper documentation.

He warned that Malaysia had activated a 560,000 Peoples' Volunteers Corps, which would help the government hunt down illegals. The members of the corps, who are ordinary citizens, would be rewarded 100 ringgit (about P15,000) for each undocumented migrant arrested.

Police, immigration and civilian volunteers were supposed to start raids on migrant hideouts on Monday, the last day of a four-month amnesty program that allowed illegal foreign workers to leave Malaysia without being prosecuted.

However, the Malaysian Ministry of Home Affairs suspended the crackdown "pending further notice," upon the request of the Philippines, Indonesia and the United Nations, Department of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Gilberto Asuque said yesterday.

Echoing labor officials, Pete Chan, executive director of the Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs, however, said the crackdown was suspended for "at least a week until further notice."

According to Asuque, of the estimated 170,000 undocumented Filipinos in Sabah, only 7,500 have obtained travel documents, and only 6,600 have departed for Manila.

Imson said more Filipinos could have left but did not bother to get travel documents as they were traveling to Mindanao by sea.

The Jan. 31 deadline was the second extension granted by Malaysia since it launched the amnesty program in October last year. The program's goal was to encourage some 1.3 million illegal workers to come out in the open and leave without penalty.

In view of the expected mass deportation, Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo reconvened last month the Philippine Inter-Agency Task Force to ensure "a smooth repatriation" of the illegal aliens.

The contingency measures include sending Navy ships to Sabah to transport the deportees home and posting a team each at the departure point in Sabah and at the arrival point in Tawi-Tawi to assist the deportees.

Task force

In a related development, Rep. Antonio Alvarez (Kampi, Palawan) yesterday called for the creation of an inter-agency task force—to include doctors and nurses—which would be deployed across the country's southern borders to accept and process Filipino deportees from Malaysia.

"A reception committee should be set up in Sulu, Palawan, Zamboanga City and other provinces near the Malaysian state of Sabah, from where most of the estimated 350,000 Filipino 'illegals' are expected to come from," Alvarez said.

He said the task force should be composed of personnel from the Departments of Health, Social Welfare, National Defense, Foreign Affairs and Local Government.

In calling for the creation of a task force, Alvarez was speaking in behalf of Palawan which experienced the influx of Vietnamese refugees in the late 1970s. *With reports from AP and AFP*

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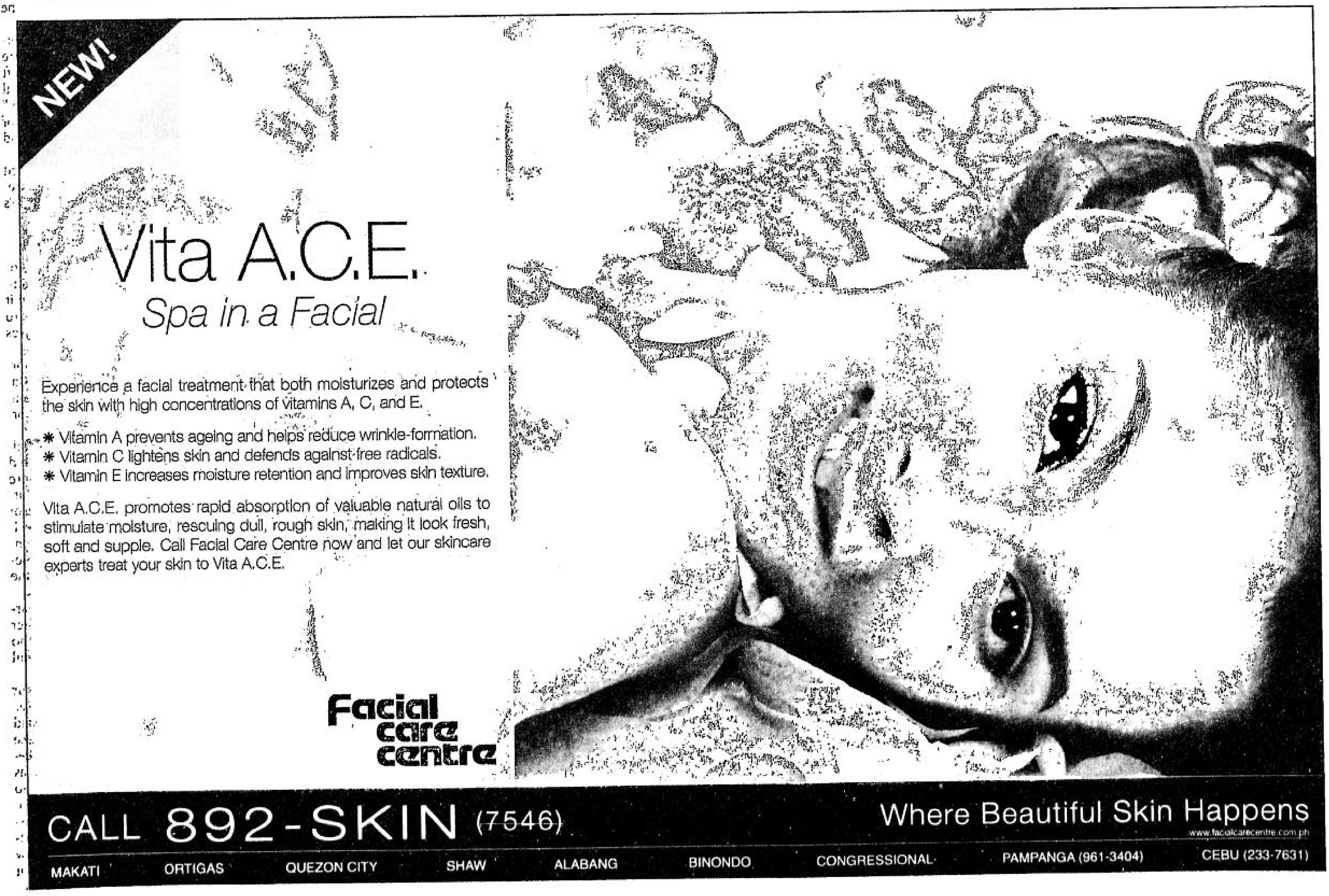

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Corrections

IN THE JAN. 28 issue, a Sports story on Page A23—"Tanauan batters seal title clash with Nueva Ecija"—misstated the name of the Tanauan City mayor. The mayor is Alfredo Corona—not Coloma.

* * *

IN THE Jan. 29 issue, a story on the front page—"Pinoys make do with less"—misquoted the Social Weather Stations 2004 survey review as saying that "most (Filipinos) preferred a more authoritarian government." The SWS actually reported that: "Though only 40 percent are satisfied with how democracy works, most Filipinos prefer it to authoritarianism." Fifty-seven percent of Filipinos preferred democracy, while 24 percent preferred an authoritarian government, according to the survey.

* * *

IN THE JAN. 29 issue, a story on Page A4—"Grafters abuse Filipino values, says Jesuit team"—erroneously stated that Fr. Romeo Intengan, SJ, is the current Jesuit provincial superior. Intengan was replaced by Fr. Daniel Patrick Huang, SJ, last year.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to Gerry Lirio, city editor, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City; fax Nos. 897-4793/94; e-mail addresses:glirio@inquirer.com.ph and daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

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323521-323530, 323941-323950, 326485-326490, 345074-345076, 345078-345080, 346455-346460, 349019-349020, 349335, 351699-351700

MM-ALB Series

000692-000700, 000851-000860

MM-BDO Series

000140, 000143-000144, 000268, 000314-000320, 002181-002190, 002194-002200, 002256, 002262, 002264, 011862-011870

MM-CMV Series

000035, 001911-001920, 002037, 002400, 002844, 002849, 003484, 003837, 004092, 004523-004524, 004527-004530, 004825, 007643, 007645-007647, 007880, 007907, 008244, 008298, 008317-008318, 008389, 008429, 008492, 008505, 008783, 009014-009020, 009697, 009699-009700, 009963, 010187, 011404, 011486, 016725

MM-PSG Series

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MM-QZO Series

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MM-VZA Series

000102-000110, 000216-000220, 000389, 000481-000490, 000812, 000814-000820

WCL-DGN Series

000491–000500, 001315, 001812, 002754, 002755, 002807, 002809, 003491, 003561, 004252, 004254–004260, 005066, 005581, 005585, 005587, 005767, 006092, 006095, 007311, 007317, 007483, 007484, 007485

WCL – BGO Series

000931–000933, 000863–000870, 000935–000940, 001013–001020, 001101–001110, 001201–001210, 001212–001220, 001382–001390,

CL -BGO Series

01391–001400, 001974, 000767–000770, 001567–001570, 001081-01090

NEL1–API Series

000241

NEL1–TGO Series

001565-001566

NEL2–SGO Series

000611–000620, 000882–000883, 000888–000889, 000921-000930, 001013, 001017, 001753-001755, 001757, 002096

CL1-BLG Series

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CL1-TLC Series

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CL1-CBN Series

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CL1-SJE Series

000313, 000422, 000426, 000555, 000559

CL2–BTN Series

000283-000284

CL2–OGO Series

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ST2 – LPA Series

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ST2 – PLN Series

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ST3–INF Series

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ST3–SCZ Series

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ST5–APO Series

000531, 000536, 000537, 000538

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CV1–CEB Series

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CV1-DTE Series

001841–001850

WM–OZS Series

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WM–ZGA Series

000183

NM–BTN Series

000552, 000052–000053, 000975, 001301, 01316, 001372, 000473

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NM–VLA Series

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SM–DVO Series

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SM–GSC Series

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SM-MBL Series

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SL-5 Series

82921-82930, 82943-82944, 82946, 82949-82950

WV-8 Series

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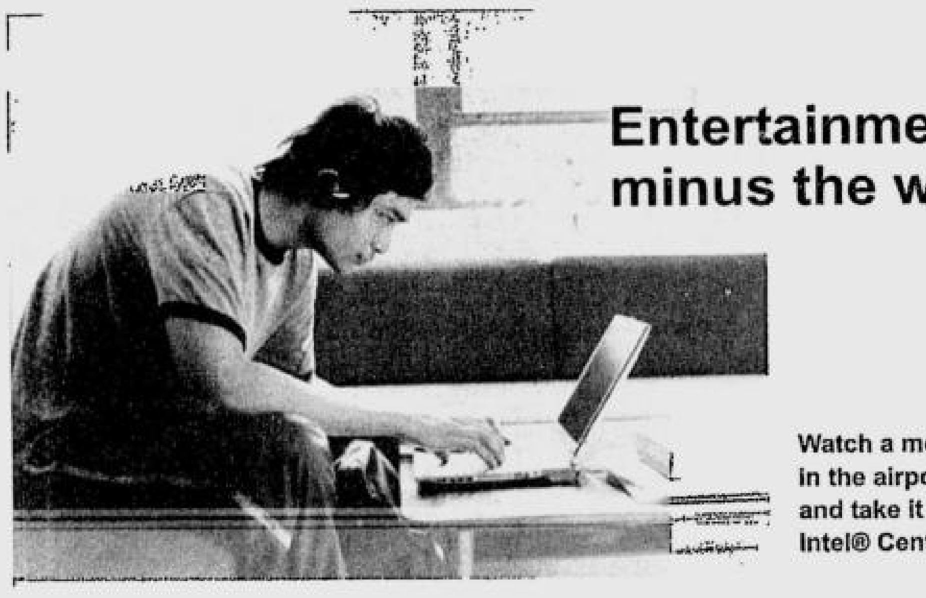

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Aussie mining firms eyeing deals in RP, says ambassador

By Germelina A. Lacorte
PDI Mindanao Bureau

DAVAO CITY—Australian mining firms are among the foreign investors excited over the prospects of the Philippine mining industry, some of them already eyeing deals with local mining companies in the mining conference in Manila scheduled for this month, Australian Ambassador Ruth Pearce told reporters.

Pearce said several Australian mining firms, including Indophil Resources, which has a 40-percent stake in the Sagittarius' copper-gold project in Tampakan, South Cotabato, were already looking forward to the mining fair.

Pearce said the Supreme Court ruling, which opened the country's mining sector to foreign investors, and the recent entry of the Northern Territory (NT) in the East Asean Growth Area (Eaga), were very encouraging to Australian firms, which had been leaving the country the past years.

"We're mainly into mining and several Australian companies are excited over the prospects," Pearce said. "We're talking here of environmentally responsible mining, with established records in Northern Territory."

Aside from Indophil Resources NL, Sagittarius' Australian partner, which has a 40 percent stake in the Tampakan project, BHP Billiton is also among those expected to join the mining fair and conference, Pearce said.

BHP Billiton has an interest in the Pujada nickel project, considered one of the country's largest mining projects. The company is also eyeing more investments in nickel in Surigao, according to Pearce.

The gross value of some 200 million metric tons of (1.3 percent nickel) reserves in the Pujada project, which is run by Asiaticus BHP Billiton, is estimated at $22.69 billion, according to data from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB).

The Tampakan copper project run by Sagittarius Mines Inc. is estimated to contain 901 million dry metric tons (DMT) of (0.75 per cent) copper, valued at $14.4 billion.

Earlier, an MGB official said an Australian company, Phelps Dodge, was also eyeing a stake in the $6.2-billion Amacan copper project of North Davao Mining Corp.

Edilberto Arreza, mining operations officer at the MBG, said the government was looking for buyers for the North Davao Amacan gold and copper project, which sits on the Masara gold area in Compostela Valley.

Aside from Phelps Dodge of Australia, Crau Minerals Inc., the firm which operates the gold and copper project in Omasdang, Masbate, is also doing due diligence on the government firm, Arreza said.

Pearce said Australian mining companies were setting their eyes on the mining investments not only in Mindanao, but also the East Asean Growth Area (Eaga) with the recent inclusion of the Northern Territory (NT) in the Eaga.

Northern Territory has been home to quite a number of big Australian mining firms, Pearce said.

It's final: SC upholds Mining Act

From page A1

the motion, none of the members of this court have changed their opinions or votes," said the tribunal, which again voted 10-4.

In a four-page resolution, the court said "all the conceivable aspects of this litigation—factual, constitutional, legal, philosophical, technical, financial, ecological, environmental and technological—have all been extensively taken up and addressed during the court's lengthy and purposeful debates and deliberations."

The resolution affirmed the court's December ruling, which reversed a landmark decision of the high court on Jan. 27, 2004 that declared the Philippine Mining Act unconstitutional.

The motion initially stemmed from a case questioning the constitutionality of the 1995 Financial and Technical Assistance Agreement (FTAA) between the government and Western Mining Corp. Phils., a wholly owned subsidiary of the Australian firm, Western Mining Corp. Holdings Ltd.

Downturn

Lack of capital and laws barring foreign investment in mining companies had resulted in a downturn in the local minerals industry with many potential deposits going undeveloped and many local mining companies shutting down their operations.

Militant, environmental and tribal groups, backed by the Catholic Church, had also opposed opening the mining industry to foreign investment.

However, the Supreme Court ruling last December reinvigorated international interest in the industry, with several new mining ventures now in the pipeline.

Mineral exports, once a top dollar-earner, brought in only $638 million or about 1.8 percent of total exports last year.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has made the revival of the mining industry one of her key tools in sustaining the country's economic growth.

Potential power

Ms Arroyo said the Philippines had the potential to be "the fifth largest mining power in the world," with the third largest gold reserves, fourth largest in copper, fifth in nickel and sixth in chromite.

In its resolution yesterday, the court addressed the dissenting opinion of Justice Antonio Carpio, which criticized the Mining Law, its implementing rules and regulations, and the FTAA for allegedly limiting "the equitable share of the state from the mining profits of the foreign contractor."

The court said that while the mining law, the executive order, and the FTAA had been declared constitutional, Congress or the President or the parties to the FTAA could still modify them "if indeed, in their opinion they are unwise or wanting in any respect."

The tribunal said the development of the country's mining industry was the responsibility of Congress or the executive branch.

"Let not this court interfere inordinately and unnecessarily," the court said.

Up to Congress, President

"The issue of how much 'profit' the nation should or could derive from the exploration, development and utilization of the country's mineral resources is a policy matter, over which we 'must allow the President and Congress maximum discretion in using the resources of our country in securing the assistance of foreign groups to eradicate the grinding poverty of our people and answer their cry for viable employment opportunities in the country," it added.

The justices who affirmed their previous vote to declare the mining law constitutional were Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr., Artemio Panganiban, Reynato Puno, Leonardo Quisumbing, Angelina Sandoval-Gutierrez, Alicia Austria-Martinez, Renato Corona, Dante Tinga, Minita Chico-Nazario and Cancio Garcia.

The four who dissented were Associate Justices Carpio, Consuelo Ynares-Santiago, Romeo Callejo and Conchito Carpio-Morales.

Associate Justice Adolfo Azcuna again abstained because he was a former counsel of the Australian mining firm involved in the case.

The court previously voted 7-5 with one abstention in nullifying the mining law and all FTAAs.

Beneficial ownership

In its January 2004 ruling, the tribunal said that FTAAs were in fact service contracts in which the government in effect granted a foreign corporation "beneficial ownership over natural resources that properly belong to the state and are intended for the benefit of its citizens."

The court ruled then that FTAAs were prohibited by the 1987 Constitution and were "antithetical to the principle of sovereignty because they allowed foreign control over our natural resources to the prejudice of the Filipino people."

At the time the seven justices who voted to declare the Mining Act unconstitutional were Davide, Puno, Quisumbing, Carpio-Morales, Corona, Callejo and Tinga.

Ruling appealed

Those who upheld the law's constitutionality were Panganiban, Ynares-Santiago, Sandoval-Gutierrez and Austria-Martinez. Retired Associate Justice Jose Vitug gave a separate opinion. Azcuna also abstained at the time.

The government and Western Mining then appealed the ruling. *With a report from AFP*

PAF has 8 new generals

By Nikko Dizon

EIGHT officers of the Philippine Air Force, led by its vice commander, were recently promoted to the next higher rank, bringing to 29 the total number of generals in the service.

The Air Force currently has 21 brigadier generals and seven two-star generals. Lt. Gen. Jose Reyes, PAF commanding general, is a three-star general.

PAF spokesperson Lt. Col. Resty Padilla said the retirement of several Air Force generals paved the way for the promotion of officers.

He added that seven more brigadier generals are set to retire this year.

Brig. Gen. Christie B. Datu, Air Force vice commander, and Brigadier Generals Ike I. Inserto and Segundo F. Dimapilis are now major generals with their promotion to the two-star rank.

Five Air Force colonels were elevated to the star-rank and are now brigadier generals, namely: Francisco Callelero, Aurelio Marquez, Oscar de Guzman, James Dimal and Fernando Manalo.

Their appointments were approved by President Macapagal-Arroyo on Jan. 9, said a statement from the PAF yesterday. They have yet to take their formal oath-taking before Ms Arroyo in Malacañang.

Datu, a member of the Philippine Military Academy Class '73 and the Philippine Air Force Flying School (PAFFS) Class '75, was the former head of the Air Defense Command prior to his appointment as Air Force vice commander.

Inserto, described by the PAF as a "top-notch management and intelligence officer," was a member of PMA Class '74 and PAFFS Class '75. He was also a senior military assistant to then Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes. He is currently the PAF chief of Air Staff.

Dimapilis, a member of PAFFS Class '73, is the incumbent commander of the PAF Air Education and Training Command based in the Fernando Air Base in Lipa, Batangas.

As "psy-ops [psychological warfare operations] specialist," Dimapilis was previously with the Civil Military Office.

Bringing the church closer to families

What began as a desire to bring the Word of God closer to families nationwide soon evolved into an undertaking that was the first of its kind. After four months of competitions from Northern Luzon to Southern Mindanao, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines Permanent Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses chaired by Archbishop Carmelo D.F. Morelos, Episcopal Commission on Biblical Apostolate chaired by Bishop Arturo M. Bastes, and Episcopal Commission on Family and Life chaired by Archbishop Paciano B. Aniceto finally concluded the National Catholic Family Bible Quiz with the Grand Finals held at the Conservatory of The Peninsula Manila on January 19, 2005.

Secretariat Chairman Miss Elvira Go (center, in green) is seen with Archbishop Paciano B. Aniceto (11th from left), Chairman of the Episcopal Commission on Family and Life; His Eminence Ricardo J. Cardinal Vidal (12th from left); Archbishop Carmelo D.F. Morelos (13th from left), Chairman of the Permanent Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses; and Bishop Arturo M. Bastes (10th from right), Chairman of the Episcopal Commission on Biblical Apostolate . With them are the Grand Prize-winning Montero family from the Visayas, and the other finalists from Luzon, Mindanao, and NCR.

The event hosted by Reverend Father John Young and Ms. Lindsay Custodio was a huge success. No less than His Eminence, Ricardo J. Cardinal Vidal, the Archbishop of Cebu, and over 20 Bishops and clergy from all over the country were on hand to witness the momentous occasion.

The four finalists, accompanied by their respective Catechists and biblical apostolate, were the Aguas Family from San Fernando, Pampanga, representing Luzon; the Montero Family from Iloilo, representing the Visayas; the Donguines Family from Sultan Kudarat representing Mindanao; and the Javiniar Family from Cainta, representing the National Capital Region.

The board of judges for the Grand Finals was chaired by self-confessed "Lover of the Bible," Bishop Antonio R. Rañola, D.D. The other judges were: Ms. Natividad Pagadut, PhD., a Theology teacher at the De La Salle University in Manila; Fr. Gil Alinsangan, S.S.P., the Director of the St. Paul Seminary in Silang, Cavite; Fr. Jesus M. Malit, S.S.S., a Scripture Professor at Maryhill School of Theology in Quezon City; and Fr. Gerardo Tapiador, S.S.L., a Scripture Professor at San Carlos Graduate School of Theology.

The Grand Finals was closely contested and eagerly followed by the audience. The finalist-families answered Biblical questions based on the New American Bible in five categories: Identification, Multiple Choice, True or False, Who Said What & To Whom, and Open Bible. Each correct answer was awarded 1 point as the families raced against time. After the first three categories, the Aguas family was ahead with what seemed to be an insurmountable six-point lead.

Eventual winner Montero family from Iloilo City consider their options during the closely-fought Finals.

The Board of Judges (L-R): Bishop Antonio R. Rañola, Chairman; Ms. Natividad Pagadut; Fr. Gil Alinsangan; Fr. Jesus Malit; and Fr. Gerardo Tapiador.

It was pure excitement in the last 2 categories as the other families rallied to overhaul the substantial Aguas family lead. At the end, the Montero family was tied with the Aguas clan. A tie-breaker was made to determine the winner. After asking one additional question from each of the five categories, the Montero family from Iloilo broke away and won the Grand Prize of P50,000! The Aguas family came in second with P30,000; the Javiniar family was third with P20,000; and the Donguines family came in fourth with P10,000. Their respective Catechists were likewise given a corresponding cash prize for their help in the enhancement of the families' Biblical studies.

For the winning Montero family, it was not just a chance to learn more about the Word of God but an opportunity to become closer as a family. According to them, many changes occurred in their lives that were definitely brought about by the Bible Quiz. Other families that participated became more than just their region's representatives; they also became true beacons of faith in their own Catholic communities and Parishes.

The National Catholic Family Bible Quiz was launched in September 2004 through the close coordination of the three commissions of the CBCP and assisted by the Bible Quiz Secretariat chaired by Columbia's Miss Elvira Go. Held in celebration of the National Eucharistic and Marian Years, the project received enthusiastic support from the country's various Parishes and Dioceses. 350 families, 305 Catechists, 325 parishes, and 45 Dioceses answered the call to study the Word of God.

All throughout the competitions, Bishops from various Dioceses gave their support. A good number of them attended the Grand Finals. They were: Archbishop Orlando B. Quevedo, DD; Archbishop Pedro R. Dean, DD; Archbishop Diosdado A. Talamayan, DD; Bishop Sergio L. Utleg, DD; Bishop Julito B. Cortez, DD; Bishop Prudencio P. Andaya, DD; Bishop John F. Du, DD; Bishop Nestor C. Cariño, DD; Bishop Antonieto D. Cabajog, DD; Bishop Camilo D. Gregorio, DD; Bishop Sofronio A. Bancud, DD; Bishop Romulo G. Valles, DD; Bishop Isabelo C. Abarquez, DD; Bishop Emilio Z. Marquez, DD; Bishop Romulo De La Cruz, DD; and Bishop Jose F. Oliveros, DD.

Several members of the clergy also contributed greatly to the smooth execution of this nationwide event. They include: Rev. Fr. Mike M. Garcia S.S.S., the Treasurer of the CBCP Permanent Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses, who helped in the formulation of the competition's guidelines. Rev. Fr. Oscar A. Alunday S.V.D., Executive Secretary of the CBCP Episcopal Committee for Biblical Apostolate, who carefully worked on the questions used at the regionals and the National Finals. Rev. Fr. Jose Adonis N. Aquino S.S.L., member of the academic formation team, Seminario Mayor de San Carlos, Cebu City, who performed Quizmaster & Host duties in the Visayas, Luzon, and NCR Regional competitions. Rev. Fr. John Christian Young, PhD, President of URIOS College Butuan City was the gracious Host and Quizmaster at the Mindanao Regionals and at the Grand Finals. Msgr. Gary Noel S. Formoso, Financial Secretary of the Archdiocese of Nuevo Segovia and Brother Francis Montero tirelessly went to the various provinces to coordinate the smooth conduct of the Diocesan level competitions for the Secretariat.

Indeed, it was a successful team effort, which one could safely conclude to have been guided by the Holy Spirit. In the end, it achieved the competition's objectives of strengthening family ties, bringing the Church closer to families, and fostering love for the Eucharist and the Blessed Mother. The participating families were also able to gain a better understanding of the Bible's teachings and their applications to daily life. ❖

THE NATIONAL
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QUIZ

THE FINALISTS

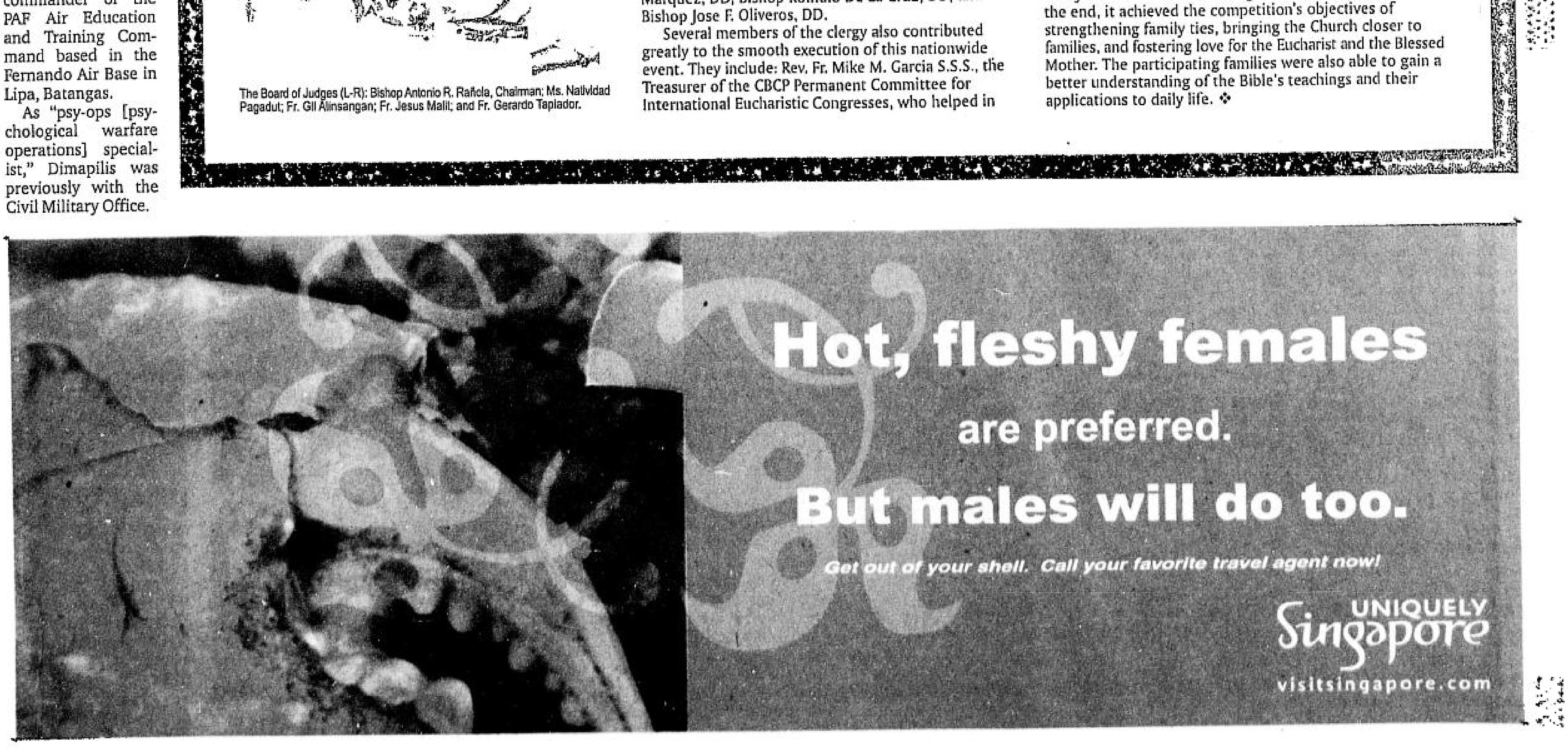
The Aguas family, from San Fernando, Pampanga, represents the Luzon region. Headed by Mr. Rodel Aguas, who conducts family life apostolate seminars in their parish, the family bested 13 others at the Luzon Regional competition held at the Holiday Inn Hotel in Clarkfield Pampanga.

The Montero family of Pabia, Iloilo City, is the representative of the Visayas. Led by Mr. Maximo Montero, a Theology Professor, the family prevailed over 7 others at the regional elimination held at the Marriott Hotel in Cebu City.

The Donguines family came all the way from Sultan Kudarat to compete with fifteen other families at the Mindanao Regionals held at the Waterfront Hotel in Davao City. Mr. Antonio Donguines, a former seminarian who studied in Rome, piloted his family through the competition to earn a berth in the Finals.

The Javiniar family from Cainta, Rizal, is the representative of the National Capital Region. Led by Mr. Joel Javiniar, Dean of the Cainta Catholic College, the family won over eight others at the NCR Regional Inter-Diocesan competition held at The Conservatory of The Peninsula Manila.

The finalists in action: (R-L) Javiniar Family from NCR, Donguines family from Mindanao, Montero family from Visayas, and Aguas family from Luzon. Rev. Fr. John Young and Ms. Lindsay Custodio (far left) were Quizmaster and co-host, respectively.



Repentant tree cutter, 7 other witnesses vs loggers

From page A1

davits—all by rural folk forced by poverty to cut trees for easy cash—to pin down the same persons who, they said, had paid or promised them a steady income for tree poaching in the Sierra Madre.

According to the sworn statements, villagers are offered between P3 and P10 "per board foot" of logs delivered to sawmills. The money is coursed through "financiers" serving as a sort of middlemen for the logging operator.

Defensor believes that he has finally snagged the big fish in illegal logging in Quezon and Aurora.

He said that the DENR would file today with the Department of Justice illegal logging cases against Green Circle Properties and Resources Inc., Inter-Pacific Forest Resources Corp. (IFRC) and Kasibo Sawmill.

Clears GMA chief of staff

By Defensor's account, Green Circle owns 75,000 hectares of property for logging and sawmill operations, while the IFRC, believed to be a subcontractor of Green Circle, has 39,000 ha.

He said these firms were engaged in illegal logging because they were operating outside their concession areas.

But Defensor cleared Norberto Gonzales, President Macapagal-Arroyo's chief of staff whom his aunt Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago had linked to an alleged illegal logger, of involvement in the crime.

Protege

In a privilege speech on Monday, Santiago said Rolly Ma—said to be operating in Bataan, Compostela Valley, Davao Oriental and Davao del Sur—was a protege of a special concerns adviser of the Arroyo administration.

It was a reference to Gonzales.

Defensor said Gonzales asked him about the matter when they were seated together at a Cabinet meeting on national security in Malacañang yesterday morning.

"Mike, I was included in the speech. I don't even know this person [Ma]," he quoted Gonzales as saying.

Defensor said that the information did not come from him, and that Gonzales was not being investigated or linked to illegal logging.

"You're just being dragged [into it], and all you have to do is to clarify," Defensor said he told Gonzales.

"Nobody said he is involved," Defensor said, adding that Gonzales might have been mentioned by some people because he "operated in Mindanao and has political parties there."

But he stressed: "It doesn't mean that Ma is cleared."

Defensor also clarified that the DENR was not linking governors to illegal logging. He said most of the governors were "allies" of the DENR in blocking illegal loggers.

Those to be charged

Topping the list of respondents are Green Circle executives led by its president Romeo Roxas, his son RJ Roxas, and manager Allan Tan.

Roxas has of late defended his firm in media interviews, arguing that Green Circle was not into logging but was just clearing its 28,000-ha private estate straddling Aurora and Quezon for development into an industrial and commercial hub—a project endorsed by the government.

But according to Defensor, the DENR has witnesses saying that logs cut outside the Green Circle property are taken to the company's sawmills to make it appear that the logs are covered by timber cutting permits issued to Green Circle.

Also to be charged are Ben Cheng, one "Engineer Dagul" and Jessie Pua—all connected with the IFRC. Cheng is the owner of the IFRC, "Dagul" his associate, and Pua the owner of a trucking fleet servicing the company.

Defensor said charges would also be filed against Totoy Ong of Kasibo Sawmill, which is actually a licensed sawmill in Infanta, but which allegedly had been a buyer or "financier" of illegally cut logs from the neighboring town of General Nakar.

Others on the charge sheet are Wilson Ong, a one-time applicant for an Integrated Forest Management Agreement with the government but who was identified by a barangay official as a buyer of "hot logs" in General Nakar.

Ong is joined by his brothers William and Wilson Marquez of Infanta, who, Defensor said, were "consistently and regularly identified as financiers of illegal logging."

The other alleged financiers listed were Ricardo Avellaneda (brother of General Nakar Mayor Hernando Avellaneda), David Prudente and Thelma Aumentado.

Team leaders

The charges will also cover "team leaders"—or those contacted by financiers to recruit tree cutters.

They were identified as Melquiades Pratorio, Alfredo Gobes, Silvestre Miras, Carmelito Aranel, Hernan Avenilla, Efipanio Orozco, Lina Orozco, Diolito Briones, and Mario dela Cruz.

Administrative cases will also be filed against several barangay captains in General Nakar who "did not cooperate" with the DENR in its investigation of illegal logging operations.

Fear of reprisal

In a statement read at the press conference, Defensor held the named companies and persons "responsible for the death and destruction" in Aurora and Quezon, the provinces that bore the brunt of the storms that whipped eastern Luzon last December.

He said his legal team took some time convincing witnesses to testify against Green Circle et al.

"The resistance of the community not only stemmed from fear of reprisal as these [respondents] are moneyed individuals, with guns and resources. But also because [the residents] perceive financiers as their source of livelihood," Defensor said.

He said financiers "give families food on the table" and are in turn regarded by villagers with "*utang na loob* [debt of gratitude]."

Under protection

Defensor said his eight eyewitnesses were now "under the protection" of the Office of the Regional Executive Director, which took their sworn statements in the presence of lawyer Ernesto Adobo, a former agent of the National Bureau of Investigation and now the RED for Region IV-A.

Ritual, 33, a resident of Dingalan, Aurora, said his loved ones perished when the Umiray River overflowed last Nov. 29 at the peak of storm "Winnie."

It was the same river that Ritual referred to in a part of his affidavit that explained how he collected logs:

"Once we have gathered a hefty volume of logs, a motor banca drags them to a sawmill of Green Circle, which buys these for P4 to P10 per board foot."

How they operate

Another witness, Miguel Nazareno, 57, provided a glimpse into how Ben Cheng and Green Circle had been allegedly getting their logs:

Cheng offers P3 per board foot—"that's why just about anyone who wants to make some money will cut some trees and bring the wood to Green Circle."

Logs "cut in other areas" are brought to sawmills inside Green Circle "to be turned into 'sticks,' so as to make them legal," Nazareno added.

Governors angry, gang up on Miriam

From page A1

Fuentes said Santiago should stop barking up the wrong tree. "The mountains [in South Cotabato] had long been denuded when I [became] governor," she said.

Fuentes said incumbent governors should not be blamed for the shortcomings and mistakes of previous local officials, especially during the 1960s and 1970s when commercial logging was rampant.

"We just inherited the problem, and in fact we are the ones now finding solutions to it," she said.

Fuentes said she called Environment Secretary Michael Defensor, Santiago's nephew, after the senator delivered her speech, only to be told that what the DENR had provided the latter was a list of the provinces where logs had been seized.

"It was a neutral report, but the problem came with the presentation and delivery of the speech," she said.

North Cotabato Gov. Manny Piñol said it was preposterous that his name was included in the list because the transport of logs or lumber was not allowed in his province.

Sarangani Gov. Miguel Rene Dominguez denied that he was doing nothing to stop illegal logging in his province.

He said that right after he assumed office last year, he declared an all-out war against illegal loggers. As a result, he said, more than 24,000 board feet of illegally cut lumber were confiscated last year by the provincial environment officials and the police.

Dominguez also claimed that as early as last August, he had proposed to the DENR a total log ban and a cancellation of all Community-Based Forest Management projects in Sarangani.

Bandits

Sultan Kudarat Gov. Pax Mangudadatu said it would be difficult for him to stop illegal logging operations, if indeed there were, in his province because of the presence of Abu Sayyaf and Abu Sofia bandits in the hinterlands.

"I am not tolerating this. But how can I stop these when there are armed groups in the area?" he said.

Compostela Valley Gov. Jose Caballero also denied involvement in illegal logging, stressing that his office's "relentless drive" resulted in the confiscation of millions of pesos worth of illegally cut trees and the arrest of big-time illegal loggers.

"The problem lies in our DENR personnel who, I suspect, are in cahoots with these illegal loggers," he said.

Bukidnon Gov. Jose Ma. Zubiri assailed Santiago for blaming the local governments for environmental degradation.

"The people in Bukidnon are mad at her. We are very, very mad at her. How can she say we are doing nothing? I challenge her to invite me to any hearing if she wants to prove her point," he said, fuming.

Zubiri cited the total log ban in Bukidnon: "The government has declared Mounts Kitanglad and Kalatungan here as protected national forests, and the province has allotted P2 million annually for the forest guards."

Missing the target

"A misguided missile" was how Camiguin Gov. Pedro Romualdo described the senator.

"I am not surprised," he said. "She always misses her target. We only plant forest fruit trees so that people would not be tempted to cut them. Planting lumber is strictly prohibited, and she would say we are not protecting our resources?"

Misamis Oriental Gov. Oscar Moreno said Santiago was blaming everybody except herself.

"Such a sweeping statement, which is a diversionary tactic in relation to the raging issue against her nephew," Moreno said. "I suggest they focus on the issue to address it properly, which could result in solutions beneficial to the economy."

Agusan del Sur Rep. Rodolfo Plaza said Santiago's speech could have been intended to "divert public attention from the VAT issue."

He expressed surprise that the list should surface at the height of the mounting public clamor against the VAT bill.

Plaza, whose younger brother, Gov. Edward Adolf, was included in the list, denied that his family was involved in illegal logging.

Just assumed office

But in Manila, Sen. Edgardo Angara said Santiago excluded from culpability those governors who had yet to stay a year in office, including his sister, Aurora Gov. Bella Angara-Castillo.

Santiago had named Aurora as among the 25 provinces where tree cutting was rampant, and mentioned Angara's sister as the incumbent governor, and therefore responsible for illegal logging there.

Angara said Santiago was holding the governors responsible because her thesis was that "under the Local Government Code, it's the local executive who should take measures to protect the forest."

"That's the only connection my sister had with the speech of Senator Santiago," Angara told reporters.

Asked whether Santiago's thesis was a fair one, Angara said: "It's not fair because there are governors on the list who had just assumed office, like my sister, and like Oscar Moreno, one of the brightest and upright members of Congress.

"In fairness to Senator Miriam, she is not accusing those who have been at their posts for less than a year."

Politics

Domingo Tumabing, chief forester of Picop Resources Inc., said the inclusion of the paper firm in Santiago's list was politically motivated.

Tumabing said former Environment Secretary Heherson Alvarez—who during his term, attempted to close down Picop for its alleged illegal logging activities—might have been behind the renewed campaign against the firm.

"We have the suspicion that Alvarez and his illegal logging cohorts were behind this renewed drive to pin us down," he said.

Picop president Teodoro Bernardino invited Santiago to visit the firm's site in Bislig, Surigao del Sur, to verify that the accusation against it was false and baseless.

He said Santiago should immediately issue a clarifying statement because the "publicly listed company with thousands of stockholders and manufacturer of pulp and paper with plantations and forests as source of raw materials" had suffered grave damage to its corporate reputation.

Lanao del Norte Gov. Imelda Quibranza-Dimaporo described Santiago's speech as "poor staff work."

Dimaporo, head of Northern Mindanao's league of governors, said Santiago's office should have first verified the information before creating the stir among local officials.

"I appreciate the concern of Senator Santiago, but I completely disagree with the notion that we in Lanao del Norte have done nothing in checking illegal logging activities," she said.

Misamis Occidental Gov. Loreto Leo Ocampos said Santiago's speech "manifested that she does not know what's going on on the ground."

Ocampos said "not a single" logging firm was operating in his province.

Sweeping charges

In Legazpi City, Camarines Sur Gov. Luis Raymund Villafuerte Jr. challenged the senator to show proof that his province had been a hot spot in illegal logging and identify persons and companies involved in the crime there.

Sorsogon Gov. Raul Lee said Santiago's allegations must be certified by the DENR to be believed.

He said the senator must exercise prudence in using the Senate in her exposés that, he said, were "all sound and fury that signify nothing."

Catanduanes Gov. Leandro Verceles, spokesperson of the League of Provinces in Bicol, said the governors in the region were protesting Santiago's "sweeping charges."

"It would be best that we all get together and collectively find solutions to this. May we suggest that the good senator, instead of making sweeping charges based on a corrupted list of alleged coddlers and partners of big-time illegal loggers, ensure that sufficient resources coming from Congress be made available to the DENR, and possibly share her pork barrel with the provinces she had identified to battle illegal logging," he said.

Albay Gov. Fernando Gonzales also challenged Santiago to provide his office a detailed report of the alleged illegal logging there.

Scapegoat

"I would welcome any investigation based on the senator's allegations, and I am more than willing to help the national government in solving this problem," he said.

As in his vehement denial of Defensor's earlier accusation that he was involved in illegal logging in the Sierra Madre, Mayor Hernando Avellaneda of General Nakar, Quezon, dismissed Santiago's allegation as "malicious lies."

"Those are all pure malicious lies that only aim to use my good name as a scapegoat for the failure of her nephew to combat illegal logging in the country," he said, adding:

"I dare Senator Santiago to prove her case in court. I will be more than willing to face her anytime to prove my innocence." *Reports from Aquiles Z. Zonio, Jeffrey M. Tupas, Grace C. Albasin, Franklin O. Caliguid, Anthony S. Allada, Ryan D. Rosauro, Dennis Jay Santos, PDI Mindanao Bureau; Juan Escandor Jr., Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Leo Martin B. Ganace, Jed Ll. Bacason and Michael B. Jaucian, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau; Christine Avendaño in Manila*

Police colonel rattles skeletons in media closets

From page A1

nars is the issue of media ethics," Varona said by phone.

Yebra has found himself a target of fierce criticisms for remarks he supposedly made last December about his wanting to kill media practitioners.

"When I see media people, it seems that I suddenly have the urge to kill," Yebra had purportedly said, according to NUJP treasurer Rowena Carranza-Paraan, a member of an international fact-finding mission which recently investigated the unchecked killings of journalists in the Philippines.

Paraan said Yebra later clarified that he made the remark in jest.

Alleged links to gamblers

Yebra has denied making such an utterance but the report has prompted Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez and opposition Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile to demand he be investigated.

Yebra, in his talk with the INQUIRER, said the radio reporter to whom he supposedly made the threat was on the "payroll" of local gambling operators, receiving P500 weekly.

He said the accusation against him was fabricated by a group of "corrupt" radio reporters hit by his campaign against rampant illegal gambling in Camarines Norte.

Yebra said he found out about this after he was moved from the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group in Camp Crame to his new post.

Power of media

In Camarines Norte, provincial directors get sacked once the local media petition for their relief, he said.

Yebra cited the case of Chief Supt. Rowland Albano who, he said, was forced to leave his post after launching a no-nonsense campaign against illegal gambling, like "jueteng" and video karera, where people place bets in a horse race available in video machines.

"I discovered that video karera operations were very rampant here," he said. "Some unscrupulous reporters and policemen would raid dens only to operate the seized machines themselves."

Yebra said this went on until last month, when he started burning all seized video karera machines.

Some operators turned to reporters who were boasting they could "fix" the matter with the local police, he said.

Reporters in 'Blue Book'

The reporters allegedly became aggressive and demanded protection or "grease" money in exchange for the favor.

Yebra said this forced a group of known video karera operators to file extortion and robbery charges against the reporters.

"They thought I was the one behind the filing of the charges, that's why they decided to attack me," he said.

Yebra said he further enraged reporters when he found a "blue book" purportedly containing the names of all gambling operators and at least 15 reporters from three local radio stations in the province.

"The local media ganged up on me, thinking I would link all of them to the illegal operations," he said. "Then they turned to the NUJP and made up the accusation that I threatened to kill them."

NUJP's Varona, in an earlier talk with reporters, said that poor working conditions in the industry made journalists more vulnerable to attacks.

"The vast numbers of journalists are receiving a pittance or nothing at all for their work. They are being exploited and sometimes forced into conflict-of-interest situations," she said.

No 'culture of violence'

Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes denied assertions by the mission organized by the Brussels-based International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) that a "culture of violence" often condoned by government officials was to blame for the killings of journalists in the country.

Reyes also denied the existence of death squads allegedly used by some local officials to stamp out unruly elements in their areas, as claimed by the fact-finding group.

"The national government will never tolerate the existence of death squads, vigilante or other such extra-legal armed groups to execute or otherwise physically attack citizens suspected of criminal activities or for any other reason," said Reyes.

No evidence

"While it is true that some media personalities and organizations have reported about the activities of alleged death squads or vigilante groups in some places, there is no evidence showing that such activities have been sanctioned by the mayor or other local authorities," he added.

The IFJ-NUJP mission said more than 50 Filipino journalists had been killed since democracy was restored in 1986, with 13 murdered last year, making the Philippines the second deadliest place for media people, after Iraq.

Citing a PNP report, Reyes said that of 60 journalist killings from 1984 to 2004, 31 cases had been filed in court against suspects and 29 were under investigation. The state has secured four convictions and four other murder cases were dismissed.

Culture of apathy

Of the cases still under investigation, six of the victims were killed in the cross fire between government and insurgency forces, while two were killed during the coup attempts in 1986 and 1989.

Gordon's support

The mission's report won support from administration Sen. Richard Gordon.

"Why does it have to take an international (mission) to tell us that we have such a problem?" he asked.

In the same phone interview, Gordon also called on journalists to watch their ranks and not engage in corruption.

"Those who engage (in corruption) easily become targets if the person they get protection money from can no longer sustain their payments. (However), rightly or wrongly, a killing is a killing," he said. *With a report from Norman Bordadora*

RP-US defense board starts war games plans

By Alcuin Papa

THE JOINT RP-US Mutual Defense Board held its first meeting of the year in Camp Aguinaldo yesterday to plan the activities to be conducted by the Filipino and American militaries in 2005, activities that would include joint military exercises.

Capt. Dennis Williams, liaison officer of the US Pacific Command, told reporters the standing committee of the MDB met to "plan and develop programs" for the two militaries this year.

"What we have here is the kick-off of this year's standing committee meetings. It is part of a regular process in our military-to-military relationship to plan and develop programs that will be effective for our militaries to follow," Williams said.

He said "security issues" would be discussed at the three-day meet, which could include the Abu Sayyaf and the Jemaah Islamiyah, two groups affiliated with Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida terror network.

Williams also confirmed the US military was starting to reduce its humanitarian forces in the South Asian countries hit by the recent tsunami disaster, but was unclear if these forces would be transferred to the Philippines.

"Depending on what the length of the need is for military assistance in the (tsunami-hit countries), that is starting to be reduced as more militaries from other countries and other government agencies and NGOs are boosting the capability to provide various types of support," he said.

"The US military, in a very measured manner, is starting to shift some of its resources elsewhere. As far as the discussion of the number of US troops in our very strong exercise programs with the Philippines, which number approximately 26 a year (is concerned), sure there are a number of factors that go into developing how many troops will participate," Williams said.

He said the MDB was "always evaluating what is the best mix of troops, US and AFP, with what are the particular needs of the government of the Philippines, including exercises that ultimately we will help the AFP develop and enhance to respond to terrorism."

The MDB is composed of some 40 members from the US Embassy, the Department of National Defense and the Department of Foreign Affairs. The board is an offshoot of the RP-US Mutual Defense Treaty signed in 1951.

"This security network contributes to regional stability providing a political environment and stability and economic growth all around the region," Williams said.

The MDB conducts meetings three times a year. After the standing and working group committees meet, the executive committee planning sessions are held.

Finally, the senior military leadership board meets and finalizes the MDB's plans.

Indons doubt Bali bomber's death

JAKARTA—Indonesian Foreign Minister Hasan Wirayuda on Tuesday expressed doubt about reports that a key Bali bomber had been killed in a military airstrike in the southern Philippines.

A Philippine military official said over the weekend that Dulmatin and fellow Indonesian Mohammad Ali Abdul Rahiman were among those killed when aircraft targeted a meeting in Mindanao on Thursday.

"I still doubt the veracity of the news," Wirayuda said, according to the state Antara news agency.

Indonesian police said Dulmatin helped assemble the bombs that killed 202 people, mostly foreigners, in the resort island of Bali in October 2002.

Wirayuda said Philippine officials had in the past been reluctant to provide details whenever allegations of Indonesian citizens' involvement in terrorism in that country surfaced.

"When we ask for information, we rarely get an answer," he said.

Philippine local military commander Col. Gerry Jalandoni said Saturday that intelligence reports indicated the airstrike killed two of three Indonesian members of the Jemaah Islamiyah regional extremist group in the area.

He said seven ripped-up bodies had been found after the strike.

The military attacked after receiving information that the three members of Jemaah Islamiyah were meeting leaders of the Abu Sayyaf Muslim kidnap group.

Jemaah Islamiyah is said to be linked to al-Qaida and is blamed for the Bali bombings and a series of other attacks in Indonesia. *AFP*

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4 PNP men killed on way to seek bandits' surrender

By Edwin O. Fernandez
PDI Mindanao Bureau

COTABATO CITY—Four policemen on their way to negotiate the surrender of Pentagon kidnap gang members were killed yesterday when they were ambushed by unidentified gunmen in Maguindanao.

The 15 attackers escaped with the Armalite rifles of the four officers and the military has launched a pursuit operation, said Col. Franklin del Prado, spokesperson of 6th Infantry Division.

The police team, led by Chief Insp. Auselito Cabang, were waylaid at 4 p.m. in Barangay Malala in Datu Paglas.

Besides Cabang, the other policemen killed were identified only as SPO3 Abusama, SPO3 Manguit and PO3 Abedin.

The Associated Press quoted the police as saying that the officers were on their way to seek the surrender of Pentagon members when they were fired upon.

The Pentagon gang is one of three guerrilla groups in the country which the United States has put on its terror blacklist. The others are the communist New People's Army and the Abu Sayyaf bandit gang.

The military could not say who were behind the attack. But Del Prado said the ambush occurred in an area where the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the Pentagon gang and other lawless groups operated.

MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu said his group had a sizeable force in the area but that "definitely the MILF had nothing to do with this."

Kabalu said the report he received was that the policemen were seeking the surrender of some MILF fighters.

The MILF has signed a cease-fire agreement with the government and off-and-on peace talks between the two sides were expected to resume in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia this month. *With AP*

SUPERINTENDENTS

PHILIPPINE National Police chief, Director General Edgar B. Aglipay, poses with the 32 newly promoted senior superintendents during simple ceremonies at the PNP Multi-purpose Center in Camp Crame recently. Aglipay administered their oath of office.

PNP goes 'hi-tech' with ATM payroll

By Christian V. Esguerra

WHAT took them so long?

After years of lagging behind most other entities in the way it pays its people, the Philippine National Police will finally be going "state-of-the-art" with the use of automated teller machines (ATMs).

In two weeks, the PNP will sign a memorandum of agreement with the Land Bank of the Philippines to scrap the old "continuous form checks," according to Director Quirino de la Torre, PNP comptroller.

De la Torre said the PNP leadership ordered the switch to the ATM system as part of several measures to stamp out corruption in the police force.

"We really need to fix the manner through which we pay our people, closing all possible rooms for corruption," he told the INQUIRER yesterday.

The new system is anything but novel, though, having been suggested many times in the past by not a few PNP officials.

The problem, a police general had once told the INQUIRER, was that the old system allowed unscrupulous officers to pad salary rolls with "ghost" or "15-30" employees—those who did not work but only showed up on the 15th and 30th of each month to collect their salaries.

Late last year, a major operational support unit was investigated after one of its officials allegedly managed to collect and pocket his men's allowances.

The official allegedly did so by giving a list of the men under him to the unit's finance officials. He pocketed their salaries after forging their signatures on the list, the general said.

"Under the new system, there would no longer be any room for ghost or 15-30 employees," he said.

Another anti-corruption measure will be the creation of an "internal audit service," a new department that would screen all PNP contracts, according to De la Torre.

There will also be the "e-Procurement" system that will place all bidding online. The idea is to minimize the "human factor," a common source of corruption in transactions.

The new auditing unit will report directly to the PNP chief and will be headed by a "very senior" PNP official of unquestionable integrity, De la Torre said.

This way, the PNP hopes to wipe out "conversion," "throwback" and other ingenious corruption schemes, he said.

Conversion happens when officers spend money specifically allocated for one item on another. It's worse when no legitimate item is bought.

Throwback is when crooked officers allocate a hefty sum for an imaginary project only to pocket the money.

House starts warming up for Cha-cha

AFTER delivering on Malacañang's wish list of tax measures, the House of Representatives is preparing to cha-cha.

The House committee on constitutional amendments yesterday approved a proposal for a concurrent resolution that would call on the House and Senate to constitute themselves into a constituent assembly to introduce changes to the 1987 Constitution.

Committee chair Rep. Constantino Jaraula (Lakas, Cagayan de Oro City) said the amendments would focus mainly on the shift to a parliamentary system and federal form of government.

"Constitutional changes are to be taken as part of the solution to our economic problems," Jaraula said in an interview.

The proposed resolution also provides for the constituent assembly to undertake a "review of basic economic provisions" aimed at "[maximizing] the benefits and welfare of the people without being shackled by unnecessary and impractical constraints and limitations."

Jaraula said his committee would push for floor deliberations on the Charter change bill to start in March.

"Since the Senate is still deliberating on tax measures already passed by the House as well as the pending 2005 budget bill, we will wait until March," Jaraula said.

The resolution must also be approved by the Senate, however.

According to Jaraula, the constituent assembly would be expected to finish within a year the deliberations on the shift to a parliamentary system and the review of economic provisions.

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Chloramphenicol cap. 500 mg	✓ 3.20	37.75	34.55/cap
Chloramphenicol susp. 125 mg/5 ml 60 ml	✓ 40.40	394.75	354.35/bot
Co-trimoxazole tab (TM-160mg SMZ-800mg)	✓ 2.30	26.00	23.70/tab
Co-trimoxazole cap. (TM-80mg SMZ-400mg)	✓ 2.60	14.80	12.20/cap
Co-trimoxazole susp. (TM-40mg SMZ-200mg)	✓ 25.40	115.75	90.35/bot
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Bromhexine HCL syrup 4 mg/5 ml, 60 ml	✓ 26.70	74.75	48.05/bot
Carbocisteine cap. 500 mg	✓ 2.40	12.25	9.85/cap
Carbocisteine susp. 100 mg/5 ml, 60 ml	✓ 32.70	87.25	54.55/bot
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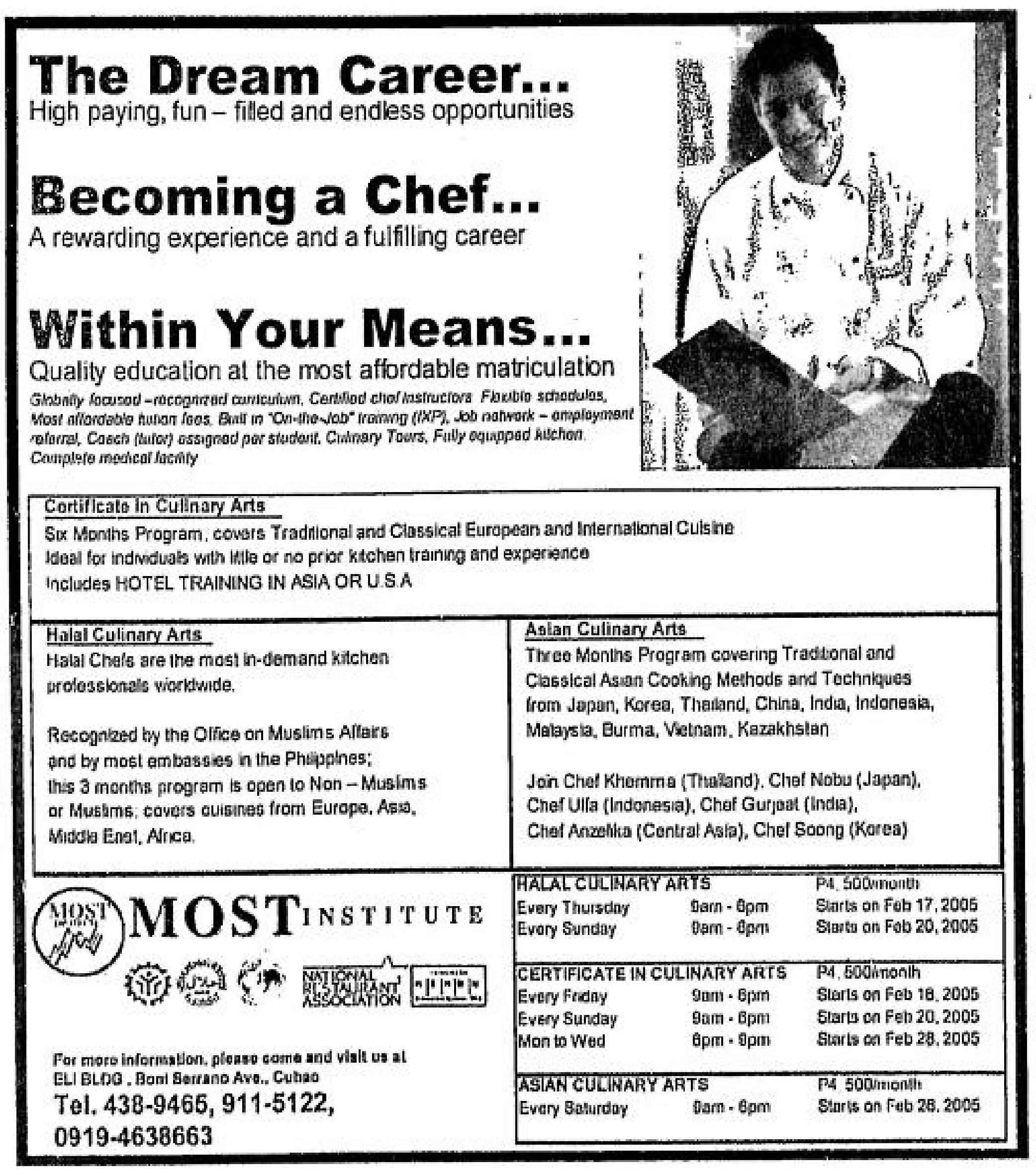
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Killed-in-action social worker honored

By Volt Contreras

WITH a 23-year experience in social work in Cagayan, Primitiva Cabrera had become the kind of person who would "give up the last P20 in her pocket if you desperately needed it," according to her brother Dixie.

"She was not good at refusing people," added her sister Daisy, "that's why officemates would often turn to her concerning clients who had no money even for a ride home."

And so nobody was really surprised when "Primie," last Oct. 19, willingly went with a man who showed up days earlier at her Tuguegarao City office asking for help. The stranger introduced himself as a leftist rebel and claimed he had two wounded comrades who must be taken to a hospital and were willing to surrender to the government.

Nine days later, on the 28th, Cabrera was found dead by a creek outside the city. The 44-year-old social worker apparently died from several blows on the head. Her body was found after police entrapped the man who had sought her help: the distressed "rebel" turned out to be part of a kidnap-for-ransom gang.

Primie's story was retold yesterday at the Department of Social Welfare and Development, where her still grieving family received her posthumous award in memory of her exemplary service.

'Killed in action'

The DSWD marked its 54th founding anniversary by bestowing a plaque of recognition to Cabrera who, in the department's eulogy, was "killed in action."

Her teary-eyed parents, Damasa and Rufino, received the plaque and a cash gift from Social Welfare Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman, following a slideshow tribute to their late daughter.

Born to farmer parents, Primie was the eldest in a brood of five, the breadwinner who supported her siblings' studies as well as that of three nieces.

CABRERA

With the brains that can lead her to more lucrative professions, the consistent honor student in elementary and high school had her eyes set on becoming a social worker.

She worked with the DSWD from 1981 to 1994, often assigned to its local offices in Cagayan. At the time of her death, she was working under the Cagayan provincial government's social welfare and development office.

She's been a veteran of countless relief operations, according to siblings Daisy and Dixie. Primie was often among the first and the bravest in her unit to ride on rubber boats during floods, "even though she cannot swim," Dixie recalled.

"She really enjoyed her job," Daisy said. "And we all thought that she can never be in danger in her line of work."

But that assuring thought came to a life-shattering end.

Kidnapped for ransom

Police investigation revealed that Cabrera, after being approached by the rebel impostor on Oct. 10, agreed to meet with him on the 19th at the Victory Liner bus terminal in the city. In that rendezvous, she was abducted by the man and his cohorts, and took her on a banca to Barangay Fabrica in Lallo town.

Two days later, Cagayan Gov. Edgar Lara reported receiving a call from a man who demanded that he pay P2 million for Cabrera's release. The social worker's family, who managed to get a line to the kidnappers, were able to negotiate and had the ransom lowered to P150,000.

The suspects ordered Dixie to put the money in a box and send it through a Rem-Marivi bus bound for Dagupan City on Oct. 27.

It was on the supposed payoff day that police entrapped Franklin de la Cruz, the man who went to see and deceived Cabrera at the social welfare office. The suspect was arrested as he was about to board the ransom money at the bus terminal. De la Cruz had also squealed on at least six other cohorts, who remained at large.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday, February 2, 2005
Presentation of the Lord

1st Reading:	Mal 3:1-4
2nd Reading:	Heb 2:14-18
Gospel:	Luke 2:22-32

When the day came for the purification according to the law of Moses, Mary and Joseph brought the baby up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, as it is written in the law of the Lord: Every firstborn male shall be consecrated to God. And they offered a sacrifice as ordered in the law of the Lord: a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.

There lived in Jerusalem at this time a very upright and devout man named Simeon; the Holy Spirit was in him. He looked forward to the time when the Lord would comfort Israel, and he had been assured by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before seeing the Messiah of the Lord. So he was led into the Temple by the Holy Spirit at the time the parents brought the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law.

Simeon took the child in his arms and blessed God, saying, "Now, O Lord, you can dismiss your servant in peace, for you have fulfilled your word and my eyes have seen your salvation, which you display for all the people to see. Here is the light you will reveal to the nations and the glory of your people Israel."

Commentary

Traditionally this is the last day of the Epiphany season when Jesus, the first born of Joseph and Mary is ritually given in obedience to the service of Yahweh, the God of the people Israel in thanksgiving for their release from bondage in Egypt. It is a feast of Light, when the Light of God begins to move into the world of ordinary time and history, growing surely and truthfully in the power of the Spirit of God in the person of Jesus. The family is met by Simeon the old faithful prophet silent in waiting on the time of God and he cries out in joy and hope that is present. This is "the light [God is] revealing to the nations" and God has let him see it in his lifetime, graciously. There will be resistance, and those closest to the Light will know their own hearts torn open, exposed and sorrowful because of closeness to the burning fire of God. The ritual finished, the child grows in wisdom; God's grace upon him. This is our way of salvation: we have seen the Light in the Word made flesh. Now we are to grow in wisdom through obedience and bring that Light into the world in our flesh and lives.

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

REMEDIAL LAW (CIVIL PROCEDURE)—**Petition for review under Rule 45**—This case must be dismissed outright as the petitioner adopted the wrong remedy in bringing this case before this court. Petitioner should have filed a petition for review under Rule 45 of the 1997 Rules of Civil Procedure instead of a special civil action for certiorari under Rule 65. The proper remedy of a party aggrieved by a decision of the Court of Appeals is a petition for review under Rule 45, which is not identical to a petition for certiorari under Rule 65. Under Rule 45, decisions, final orders or resolutions of the Court of Appeals in any case, i.e., regardless of the nature of the action or proceedings involved, may be appealed to us by filing a petition for review, which would be but a continuation of the appellate process over the original case. On the other hand, a special civil action under Rule 65 is an independent action based on the specific grounds therein provided and, as a general rule, cannot be availed of as a substitute for the lost remedy of an ordinary appeal, including that to be taken under Rule 45. Accordingly, when a party adopts an improper remedy, as in this case, his petition may be dismissed outright. [Citations omitted.] [Resolution, Justice Quisumbing, First Division, Mercado vs Court of Appeals, G. R. No. 150241, November 4, 2004]

BY R. B. VERA

NOTICE OF INTENT FOR A TENDER OFFER

Globe's Board of Directors approved an offer to purchase one share for every fifteen shares of the outstanding common stock of Globe (par value ₱50) from all shareholders of record as of 10 February 2005, at a price of ₱950 per share. The approval allows Globe to purchase up to 9,326,924 shares representing 6.67% of its outstanding common shares. Each shareholder is entitled to tender a proportionate number of shares owned at the 1:15 ratio for purchase by Globe upon and subject to the terms and conditions of the tender offer. Shares purchased on the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) on or after 7 February 2005 will not be eligible for tender to Globe.

Globe intends to commence the tender offer at 9:00 am on 3 February 2005 and to end the offer at 3:00 pm on 2 March 2005.

Globe has appointed ATR-Kim Eng Securities, Inc. as Depositary. Tender forms will be sent out to shareholders of record and will also be made available at the Depositary and through the PSE upon commencement of the offer. Shareholders who decide to tender their shares should complete and execute the tender form and together with required documents deliver the same to the Depositary at 17th Floor, Tower One & Exchange Plaza, Ayala Avenue, Makati City, Telephone No. (63-2) 849-8888, (Attention: Nilaida S. Enriquez) during the offer period.

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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Al-Qaida vows to pursue jihad in Iraq

BAGHDAD—Al-Qaida vowed to pursue "holy war" in Iraq on Monday after failing to wreck elections, and Prime Minister Iyad Allawi urged rival ethnic and religious groups to unite after the first multiparty vote in 50 years.

Al-Qaida Islamist militants denounced the historic elections on Sunday as an "American game" but leaders around the world hailed the vote as an unexpected success, regardless of whether they had supported or opposed the US-led war in 2003.

War opponents France, Germany and Russia all hailed Iraqis' bravery in voting and, in a sign of warming transatlantic ties, pledged to back US efforts to restore stability.

But the al-Qaida group in Iraq, whose leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi had threatened voters with death in a bid to wreck the election, said it would pursue its war against US-led occupying forces and Iraqis working with them.

"We in the al-Qaida Organization for Holy War in Iraq will continue the jihad until the banner of Islam flutters over Iraq," said the statement posted on an Islamist website.

A videotape on Monday purported to show insurgents from another militant group downing a British military plane with a missile near Baghdad in a crash that killed 10 people on Sunday—Britain's worst single death toll in Iraq.

The video, aired by an Arabic TV channel and issued by the 1920 Revolution Brigades, showed an explosion then smoldering debris of what looked like a plane, including an engine, on the ground and filmed at close range in a large field.

Analysts said the wreckage on the video looked authentic but the first part—shots of a button being pressed and a rocket streaking off skyward—was less convincing.

In a televised speech, Allawi warned Iraqis violence had not ended just because the election had exceeded expectations and he urged rival factions to forge unity:

"The whole world is watching us. As we worked together yesterday to finish dictatorship, let us work together toward a bright future—Sunnis and Shiites, Muslims and Christians, Arabs, Kurds and Turkmen."

Allawi, who could be reappointed, is keen to build popular support after a poll in which election officials estimate 8 million Iraqis voted, confounding predictions many would be scared away by insurgent threats of a bloodbath.

Yet while the election day onslaught of suicide bombers and mortars was less bloody than expected, violence persisted.

On Monday, three US Marines were killed in action south of Baghdad, the US military said, and US guards shot dead four detainees during a riot at a military prison in southern Iraq. *Reuters*

Success of Iraq elections seen affecting Arab nations

BEIRUT—The winds of democracy are blowing from Iraq, and Arab nations are starting to feel the pinch.

The success of a democratic election in Iraq, however imperfect, after decades of dictatorship could put pressure on Arab leaders to reform their political systems, hold free elections and do away with authoritarian governments.

"The Americans were able to hold elections in Iraq and that made them much more comfortable in carrying on with their policies in the Middle East," said Lebanese political analyst Ali Hamadeh. "They showed everybody that you can carry on with an electoral process even when you have security problems."

Hamadeh said the message of the election is that if Iraq could carry out "an all-weather democratic process" there is no excuse for other countries not to reform.

Many are feeling the pressure—at least to make a show of democratic reform—and 2005 is shaping up to be the year of Middle East elections, even if few of them are expected to threaten the established regimes.

The Palestinians held a poll—widely praised, despite a few irregularities—which brought Mahmoud Abbas to power earlier this month to replace Yasser Arafat, who died in November.

Saudi Arabia, an absolute monarchy, will hold its first municipal elections in 45 years beginning Feb. 10, a vote postponed from last September.

A parliamentary election in Lebanon, expected by May, will test Syria's grip on the country as the West pushes Damascus to withdraw its army. Three previous elections were influenced deeply by Syria, which will face pressure to back off on this one.

Egypt, the Arab world's most populous country, holds presidential and parliamentary elections later this year, though the presidential vote is essentially a referendum on one candidate approved by a parliament dominated by President Hosni Mubarak's party. Mubarak, 76 and in power since 1981, is seeking a fifth six-year term despite calls for him to retire.

Jordan's King Abdullah II announced plans last week to introduce limited democratic reforms by establishing elected councils to oversee development. In a CNN interview aired Monday, he said the Iraqi elections set a positive tone for the region.

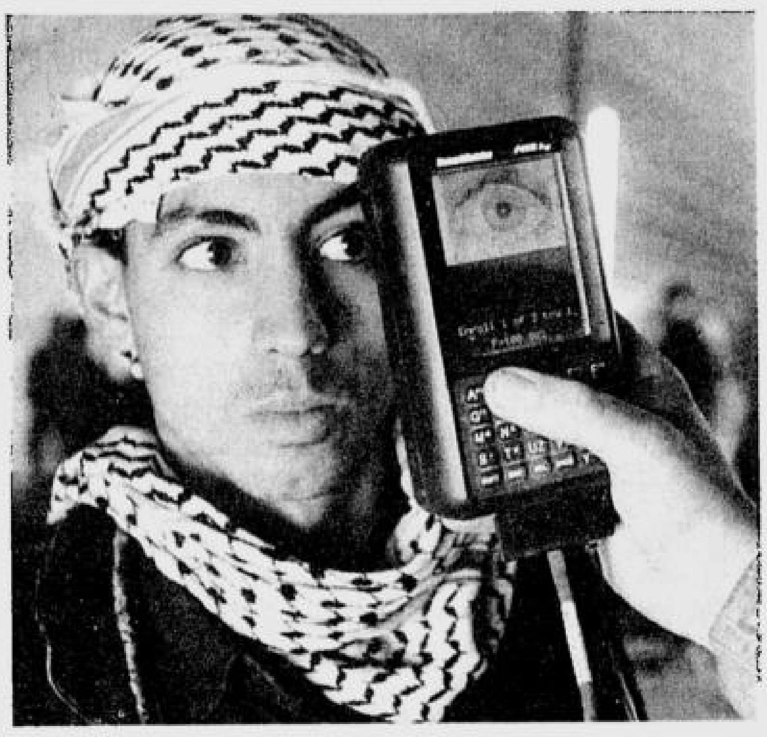
"Once you open the door of reform and it's allowed to be discussed in society, as it is throughout the Middle East, it's very difficult to close again. So I think that people are waking up, leaders are understanding that they have to push reform forward and I don't think there's any looking back," he said.

But others were more hesitant, saying the regional impact of the elections remained to be seen.

"The United States considers that just holding an election is a triumph by itself. This is hollow talk," said Hassan Nafaa, a political science professor at Cairo University. "The core of the issue is whether the elections are the beginning of a solution to the Iraq crisis or whether they are part of an escalation."

After toppling Saddam Hussein in 2003, the United States promised Iraq would become a model for Arab democracy, and pushed regimes in the region to yield to some local demands for change. Reform, Washington says, will make Muslim and Arab societies less fertile ground for extremists.

That policy was broadly reinforced in US President George W. Bush's second inaugural speech earlier this month. *AP*



THIS Jan. 25 US Department of Defense handout image released Jan. 30 shows a Marine scanning an Iraqi citizen's retina at Brahma Park in Falluja, Iraq. US Marines are utilizing a Biometric Analysis Tracking System to find and identify insurgent forces. AFP

EU halts sanctions on Cuba

BRUSSELS—The European Union suspended diplomatic sanctions against Cuba Monday, easing a standoff triggered by a clampdown on dissidents by Havana in 2003—but it vowed to maintain pressure on Fidel Castro.

The suspension, to be reviewed before July, was decided after Castro's regime released a number of dissidents and signaled a re-opening of diplomatic contacts with EU embassies in Havana.

"All measures taken on June 5, 2003 have been temporarily suspended," said Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn, whose country currently holds the EU's rotating presidency, in reference to the date the sanctions were agreed.

The decision will notably allow the resumption of high-level visits, although such trips must be used to push for improvements in human rights and the rights of dissidents in Cuba.

The EU froze relations with Cuba following a crackdown that saw 75 dissidents jailed for terms of between six and 28 years. Three Cubans found guilty of hijacking a ferry were executed.

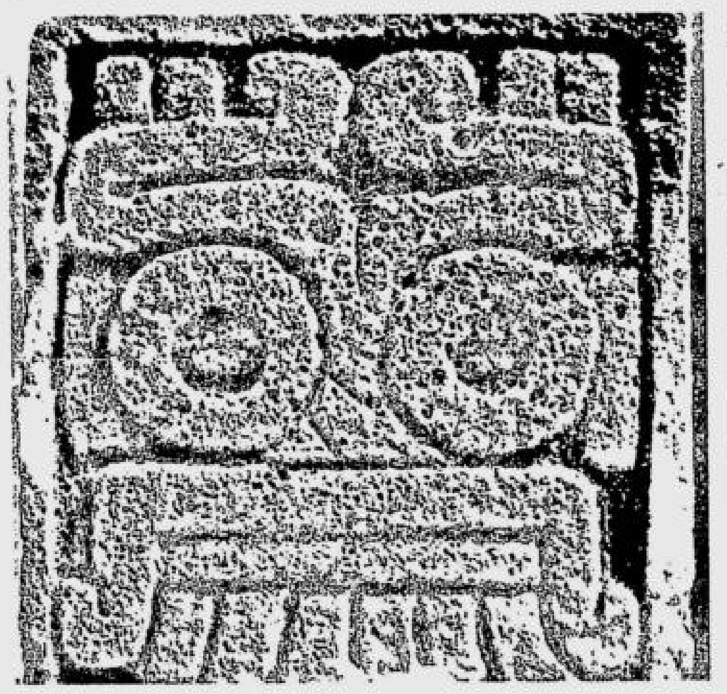
But the standoff has eased since the release of a number of the dissidents, in a move seen partly as a gesture to win over EU nations most opposed to lifting the sanctions.

In addition Cuba announced in January it was restoring diplomatic ties with all EU states represented in Havana, including the four most opposed to lifting the sanctions: the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Poland and Slovakia.

But the suspension of the sanctions is not a definitive end to the row.

Asselborn said the suspension will be reviewed under the Luxembourg EU presidency—which ends on June 30—"in the light of developments and progress toward pluralism and respect of human rights in Cuba."

"We highlighted the need to support a process leading to democratic pluralism, respect of human rights and basic freedoms in Cuba," he added in a break from regular EU foreign ministers' talks in Brussels. *AFP*



ARCHEOLOGICAL FIND

One of the 14 stone carvings that were found in the archeological area of the Templo Mayor in Mexico City's main square. The Temple and other structures were some of the first sights Hernan Cortez and his Spanish travelers saw when they arrived at Tenochtitlan nearly 500 years ago. REUTERS

Military tribunals in Guantanamo unconstitutional, judge declares

WASHINGTON—A US federal judge Monday ruled that military tribunals for international terror suspects at the Guantanamo Bay Naval base are unconstitutional, leaving in doubt the fate of hundreds of detainees at the US-run detention center in Cuba.

The administration of President George W. Bush, which created the tribunals, contested the ruling, noting that an earlier Federal Court ruling had supported US policy toward Guantanamo detainees.

"We respectfully disagree with the decision," said White House spokesperson Scott McClellan.

After considering court appeals filed by 11 "enemy combatants" held at the facility, "the court concludes that the petitioners have stated valid claims under the Fifth Amendment to the United State Constitution," Judge Joyce Hens Green wrote in her ruling, adding that the detentions "violate the petitioners rights to due process of law."

The Fifth Amendment to the US Constitution states that no one under US jurisdiction can be "be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law."

The court also found that some of the detainees, are in fact, covered by the Geneva Conventions.

"The court holds that at least some of the petitioners have stated valid claims under the third Geneva Convention," according to a declassified version of the federal ruling which was posted Monday on the court's website.

Green ruled that US officials withheld from detainees access to evidence used against them, and that the US government has tended to rely on statements obtained by torture. She also determined that the government's definition of "enemy combatant" was vague and overly broad.

Suspects captured in the US-led war on terrorism, most of whom were taken prisoner in Afghanistan after US-led forces toppled the Taliban regime, or Pakistan, are being held as illegal combatants without Geneva Convention protections.

Detainees at Guantanamo were taken into custody beginning in early 2002, with some imprisoned now for nearly three years, while others were captured as recently as September of last year.

"Although many of these individuals may never have been close to an actual battlefield and may never have raised conventional arms against the United States or its allies, the military nonetheless has deemed them detainable as 'enemy combatants' based on conclusions that they have ties to the al-Qaida terror network or other terrorist organizations," the court document said. *AFP*

Jury selection starts in Jackson molestation case

SANTA MARIA, Calif.—After months of delays and intense pretrial publicity, Michael Jackson took his seat in court on Monday as the task of selecting a jury began in the child molestation case that has put his career, reputation and freedom at risk.

By the end of the first day, more than 300 people had been asked whether they would be able to spend up to six months on the jury. Finding a panel to hear the case is expected to take up to a month.

More than 175 potential jurors said they would serve, while about 140 said it would be an ordeal and asked to be excused.

The 46-year-old self-described "King of Pop," who said on Sunday that he would be "acquitted and vindicated," is accused of molesting a 13-year-old boy who lived at Jackson's fairy tale-like Neverland ranch in the hills above the central California town of Santa Maria.

The potential jurors were brought into Santa Barbara Superior Court Judge Rodney Melville's courtroom about 150 at a time, starting about an hour after Jackson sat down with his lawyers at the defense table.

The superstar was dressed totally in white—a symbol of innocence—with a jewel-encrusted belt and gold braided arm band.

He looked upbeat, smiled and joked with his lawyers, shook hands with the court clerk and occasionally dabbed at the pink lipstick he was wearing with a tissue. When jurors were being questioned, Jackson sat completely still.

Some did not want to serve the anticipated six months.

"Your honor, I am too old to serve. I am 75 years old," one woman said. "You don't look a day over 60," the judge responded.

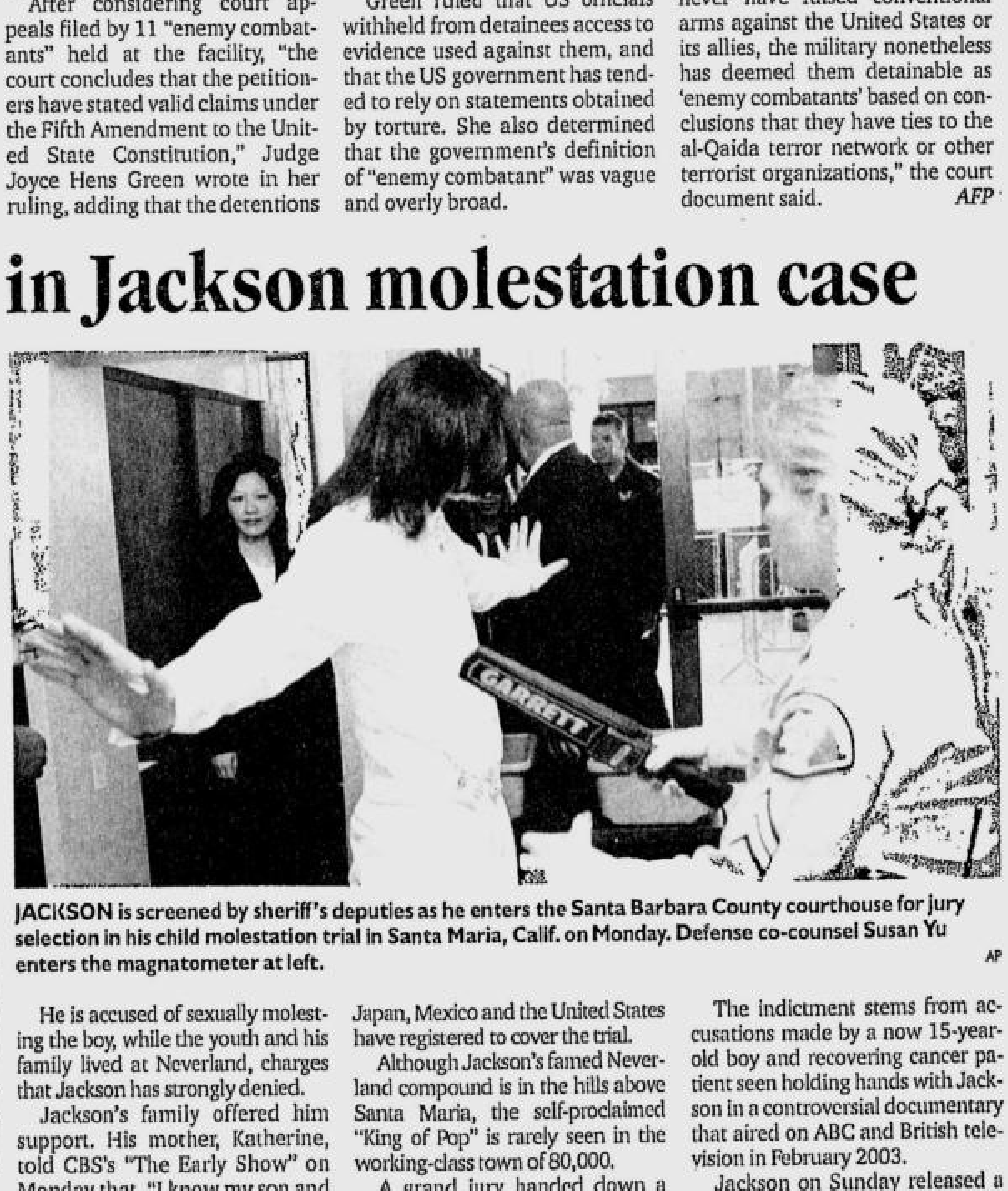
Others asked to be excused for reasons ranging from financial hardship to the fact that they were their families' sole breadwinners. Legal experts said the prospective jurors appeared to be predominately white, with far smaller numbers of blacks and Hispanics.

Judge Melville made notes and reserved decision about who will have to return on Feb. 7 to form the jury pool. The names of the jurors were not made public.

About 200 fans, kept behind two rows of fences, cheered Jackson as he arrived at the courthouse, surrounded by bodyguards, including one who held a large black umbrella over him to shield him from the sun.

Some of Jackson's supporters camped out overnight at the courthouse, despite chilly weather and fences designed to keep them well away from the performer.

The fans sang songs and held up signs of encouragement, including such placards as "France Supports MJ" and "We believe you Michael." Jackson smiled and made a V for victory sign.



JACKSON is screened by sheriff's deputies as he enters the Santa Barbara County courthouse for jury selection in his child molestation trial in Santa Maria, Calif. on Monday. Defense co-counsel Susan Yu enters the magnatometer at left. AP

He is accused of sexually molesting the boy, while the youth and his family lived at Neverland, charges that Jackson has strongly denied.

Jackson's family offered him support. His mother, Katherine, told CBS's "The Early Show" on Monday that, "I know my son and this is ridiculous."

The trial of Jackson, one of the world's best-known entertainers, has drawn worldwide media attention.

More than 1,000 journalists from Australia, Britain, France, Germany, Japan, Mexico and the United States have registered to cover the trial.

Although Jackson's famed Neverland compound is in the hills above Santa Maria, the self-proclaimed "King of Pop" is rarely seen in the working-class town of 80,000.

A grand jury handed down a 10-count indictment against Jackson in April, charging him with lewd acts on a child under the age of 14 and conspiring to commit the crimes of abduction, false imprisonment and extortion.

The indictment stems from accusations made by a now 15-year-old boy and recovering cancer patient seen holding hands with Jackson in a controversial documentary that aired on ABC and British television in February 2003.

Jackson on Sunday released a videotaped statement saying that leaks to the media about grand jury testimony in the case contained information that was "disgusting and false" and predicted victory at trial. *Reuters*

BASQUE HOLIDAY
A man from the small Spanish Basque village of Iturem, Spain, on Monday, walks in disguise as he blows a horn to frighten the village spirits and to have a good spring harvest, at the start of the holiday of Zampantzar. AP

Nepal king sacks government

KATMANDU—King Gyanendra dismissed Nepal's government on Tuesday and declared a state of emergency, taking control of the Himalayan kingdom for the second time in three years.

He denied his takeover was a coup, although soldiers surrounded the houses of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and other government leaders.

The king announced his decision to sack the government on state radio, but shortly afterwards communications links between Katmandu and the rest of the world appeared to be cut.

India's NDTV television channel said the monarch had placed politicians under house arrest, but no further details were available.

Armored military vehicles with mounted machine guns were patrolling the streets of Katmandu, the capital, and phone lines in the city had been cut.

The strategic Himalayan nation, sandwiched between India and China, is locked in a bitter three-way struggle among the king, political parties and Maoist rebels.

In an announcement on state-run television, the king accused the government of failing to conduct parliamentary elections and being unable restore peace in the country, which is beset by rebel violence.

"A new Cabinet will be formed under my leadership," he said, accusing political parties of plunging the country into crisis. "This will restore peace and effective democracy in this country within the next three years."

Later, state-run television reported that a state of emergency had been declared.

The monarch, who is also the supreme commander of the 78,000-member Royal Nepalese Army, said security forces would be given more power to maintain law and order. But he insisted human rights would be respected.

Deuba also was fired as prime minister in October 2002, sparking mass street protests demanding the restoration of a democratically elected government.

The king reinstated Deuba last year with the task of holding parliamentary elections by March 2005 and conducting peace talks with the Maoist rebels.

This is the fourth time the king has sacked a prime minister in less than three years. Nepal has had no parliament since 2002.

Nepal has been in turmoil since Gyanendra, 55, suddenly assumed the crown in 2001 after his brother, King Birendra, was gunned down in a palace massacre apparently committed by Birendra's son, the crown prince, who also died. Ten members of the royal family were killed.

Riots shook Katmandu after the killings. Soon after, fighting intensified between government forces and the rebels, who control large parts of Nepal's countryside.

The rebels, who draw inspiration from the late Chinese revolutionary leader Mao Zedong, have been trying since 1996 to overthrow the government and establish a socialist state. They have refused the government's invitation to come into the mainstream of Nepalese politics and end the violence.

More than 10,500 people have died since the fighting began.

Democracy and royalty have long had a difficult relationship in Nepal.

Gyanendra's late father, King Mahendra, established a rubber-stamp government and parliament but retained absolute power and outlawed political parties. The absolute monarchy ended when street demonstrations forced the king to give way to a multiparty government in 1990. *AP, Reuters*

Pope stricken with flu, cancels audiences

VATICAN CITY—Pope John Paul is suffering from influenza and has been forced to cancel public appearances for the first three days of the week, including his general audience on Wednesday, a Vatican source said.

The frail, 84-year-old Pope fell ill on Sunday and originally only suspended his audiences on Monday. Doctors later urged him to take a longer break.

"They have advised him to cancel his engagements to conserve his strength," a Vatican cleric said.

The last time Pope John Paul had to skip a scheduled event was in September 2003, when his weekly audience was scrapped because he was suffering from an intestinal ailment.

However, Vatican officials were at pains on Monday to play down the latest illness.

"He has joined the other millions of Italians who have the flu," chief Vatican spokesperson Joaquin Navarro-Valls said, adding that the Pope had "a slight fever that is no cause for worry."

The Pope, who suffers from Parkinson's disease and no longer walks in public, was well enough to be given the first copy of the 2005 edition of the Vatican yearbook in his private apartments, Navarro-Valls said.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Rome is suffering an unusually cold snap and the winter chill has coincided with an outbreak of influenza across Italy, that has laid up one out of 100 people, state television said.

During his last public appearance, on Sunday in St. Peter's Square, the Pope spoke in a hoarse voice.

The health of the leader of the world's one billion Roman Catholics had been relatively steady in past months.

There have been reports that the improvement was due to changes in his medication for the Parkinson's disease that has afflicted him for more than a decade.

Aides say the Pope is still running the Church despite his ailments, though in recent months they have reduced his workload by keeping audiences short and reading longer speeches for him.

As his health has declined in recent years, the once athletic Pope has stressed several times that he will stay in office until he dies, in keeping with Papal tradition.

The last Pope to resign willingly was Celestine V, who stepped down in 1294. *Reuters*

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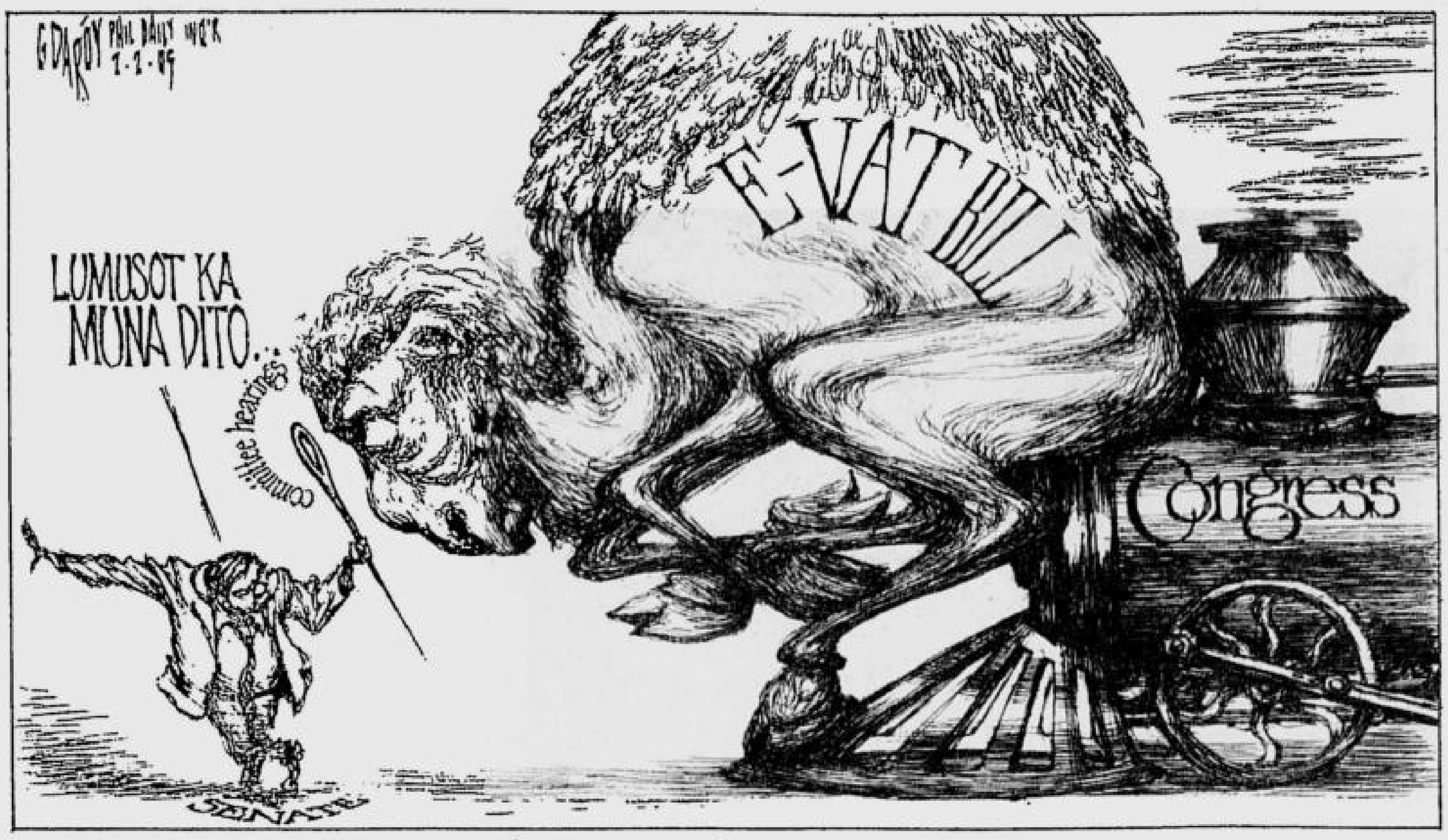


Fear

EDITORIAL

THE DAY after the International Federation of Journalists' (IFJ) issued a report calling 2004 "a bad year, perhaps the worst ever, for the killing of journalists and media staff," particularly in Iraq and the Philippines, Maximo Quindao, editor and publisher of the Tagum-based Mindanao Trucknews, was shot dead. This was after Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said, "The [IFJ] report is misleading because majority of cases involving the slaying of journalists have been solved by the PNP's (Philippine National Police's) special task force created for this purpose."

But what was really misleading, what the IFJ said or how the Palace responded? The IFJ pointed out that the murder of 13 journalists in 2004 "tarnished the country's democratic credentials." The report added: "Time and time again, journalists who were vigorous and independent in their reporting are singled out and murdered with apparent impunity." The National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) says the police haven't solved the crimes.

The first, and fundamental, problem is that journalists have been murdered and, as shown by what happened to Quindao, they continue to be murdered. At the end of the day, while the government can claim to solve murders, such claims, even if true, are secondary to the real problem, which is that journalists shouldn't have to fear being murdered in the first place. In his wild and woolly way, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez got to the heart of the matter by telling the IFJ that it should realize that not all of the more than 50 or 60 journalists killed in the Philippines since 1986 were murdered due to their work in media. But even that doesn't diminish the reality that too many people are being murdered, and too little is being done to make people feel safe.

Bunye was correct in saying that the solution is not to arm journalists. Chris Cramer, founding president of the International News Safety Institute (INSI), said that even if 2004 and 2005 are turning out to be "hunting season for journalists," their safety isn't going to be assured by arming them. The international media have responded to the killings by setting up the INSI, producing, as one British media group puts it, "a rare flowering of cooperation in a notoriously fragmented industry." The INSI opened "regional news safety" offices in Africa and Latin America, with more offices in Asia and the Middle East scheduled to open this year to engage in safety training for media people working in "hot spots" like Iraq and the Philippines. To our knowledge, the program does not include training on the use of firearms.

The IFJ says the problem stems from a "culture of fear" reigning in this country. Gerard Noonan, an Australian member of the IFJ team that issued the report, said they learned about senior government officials, including two city mayors in the south, openly supporting the use of death squads to deal with unruly people in their areas. "When such a culture is allowed to flourish at an official level, it is little wonder that aggrieved local strongmen or political figures turn to hit men to get even with the media," Noonan said.

We must add that such strongmen types don't get even only with the media, they get even with whoever crosses their path: witnesses, citizens, political opponents, etc. Since media practitioners can break up a strongman's or warlord's territory, media people, end up on top of the death list. Rowena Carranza-Paraan, a Filipino member of the IFJ fact-finding mission, quoted one senior PNP official, as saying chillingly, "When I see media people, it seems that I suddenly have the urge to kill."

The IFJ report zeroes in on something millions of Filipinos know for a fact, but which, because it is experienced on a personal level and often, in more remote parts of the country, is not experienced collectively by the public. That experience is fear: fear of speaking out, fear of the consequences of displeasing a powerful military man or public official. It is murder happening with increasing frequency that is the biggest problem, and not just the liquidation of some journalists. The murder of journalists guarantees that bad news is localized, and ensures, despite all the fuss, that getting at the truth becomes much more difficult. The consequence is inevitably more murders, with less and less of a chance of being solved.

Questions on Masinloc power plant bidding

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

THE PUBLIC bidding for government contracts has been made mandatory by law to prevent favoritism and corruption in the awarding of contracts. Rules are formulated to govern each bidding. But still, most biddings are followed by charges of collusion, manipulation and "*lutong macao.*" Don't we know how to conduct biddings that are fair, honest and non-controversial?

The 600-megawatt Masinloc coal-powered plant is another such controversial contract. Masinloc is reportedly the National Power Corp.'s newest and most efficient thermal power plant. The winning bid was made by the YNN-Great Pacific consortium: $564 million, but 60 percent of that will be loaned, payable in 25 years, to the buyer by the seller, PSALM, the government agency tasked with disposing of Napocor's assets. And what are the assurances that the government will get paid for the balance of 40 percent?

Indeed, that bidding has raised many questions:

1. Is it true that YNN is a company that has only a P1-million capitalization? Is it a bona fide bidder? If not, what is its game plan?

Is it true that independent power producers use project companies that initially have little capital? Why would the supposedly deep-pocketed Australian partner, Great Pacific, not bid in its own name to at least give credibility to its bid?

With this precedent, what is there to stop future speculative bidders with only $1 million capital to bid for billion-peso Napocor power plants?

Why did PSALM not require any pre-qualification, which is the prudent thing to do for such a big bidding? After all, it will be giving a 60-percent loan to the buyer.

2. Is it only coincidence that only companies close to the Lopez group, which owns Meralco, were able to bid?

YNN's owners, it should be remembered, got a 218-MW power supply contract for Meralco in 1996. They eventually formed Duracom, which they sold to East Asia Power. YNN's owner Sonny Sun is a retired Meralco executive and a close associate of the Meralco president. East Asia Power was partly owned by Jesus Alcordo, at present a commissioner of the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) and reportedly an uncle of Edward Alcordo, the Australia-based CEO of Great Pacific Investments, supposedly the lead group of YNN consortium. Jess Alcordo was also a former Napocor president and friend of former PSALM president and Popo Lotilla (incumbent PSALM president) mentor, Edgardo del Ponso.

The second bidder, First Generation, is a Lopez-owned company that controls the 500-MW First Gas Power plant.

3. Was there manipulation to ensure that only a Lopez-friendly group won the bidding?

The government bidding Masinloc as a merchant plant (i.e., without a power supply market) scared away many otherwise bona fide bidders. Was this intended to limit competition?

Another major bidder was reportedly not able to bid when a Lopez subsidiary backed out of a partnership with it at the last minute, catching the bidder unprepared to bid on its own.

Was First Generation's bid of $288 million a joker made only to ensure that there would be no failed bidding?

4. Would the government have gotten a better price had it bid Masinloc with a long-term power sales agreement which Meralco refused to enter with Napocor?

And would YNN and Great Pacific have bid such a higher price if they were not assured of landing a power supply contract with Meralco?

5. Is it possible that PSALM and the Department of Energy rushed the bidding to avert a credit downgrade? Shortcuts are taken when we rush. Or was the urgency used to justify the fallible rules?

6. While we can be happy for what seems to be a good price for the government, there is no assurance that the public will not be charged a higher generation rate when Meralco and YNN negotiate for a power supply contract.

Let us hope that Meralco starts showing a heart for the consuming public as a public utility company should. It negotiated a bloated P5 per kWh rate with Quezon Power coal plant similar to Masinloc at the time they could buy power from Napocor at only P3 per kWh.

The 400-MW Quezon Power, by the way, was brokered by the Chalmers Group, the same Lopez family friend who is promoting a 1,200-MW natural gas power project in Bataan, again with a negotiated power supply contract with Meralco.

7. Here is a sinister but not impossible scenario that our government should watch out for:

As of now, there are only two qualified bidders with valid bids: YNN-Great Pacific with a bid of $564 million, and First Generation with $288 million. Suppose YNN, as a small-capitalized company, fails to make good on its $564 million bid? On the surface, it could forfeit its $9 million bid guaranty. But suppose the game plan was to eliminate unfriendly competitors and then First Generation offers to reimburse YNN the $9 million bid guaranty and another $9 million for its profit? Would PSALM refuse to award the contract to First Generation which then becomes the winning bidder at $288 million? If a YNN buyout of say $18 million is added to $288 million, that totals only $306 million for a 660-MW power plant that knowledgeable power players say is worth at least $400 million.

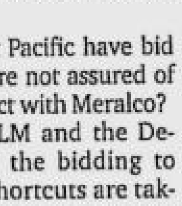
What is even worse is if PSALM accepted a $9-million bid guaranty that cannot be encashed because it contained many impossible requirements.

If this scenario plays out, the government could lose $276 million or P15.4 billion.

Whoever thought of this scheme is a world-class con man. Is it too late to save the government from him?

Heart and mind

THERE'S THE RUB



Conrado de Quiros

IT'S not without drama, and some of the moments were perfectly moving. That was the spectacle of Iraqis voting in free elections for the first time since 1953, amid the mayhem wreaked by those opposed to them. The picture that appeared on our front page last Monday of an Iraqi woman holding her ID and ballot card as she prepared to vote in her city of Sadr said it all. I remember a similar picture I saw after the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan, of a woman lifting her veil for the first time in her life. These are great, almost epochal, changes.

Yet for all this, much of the world may be forgiven for having a skeptical, if not cynical, view of the elections in Iraq. "This is democracy," AP quotes an elderly Iraqi woman in a black *abaya*, who is holding up her thumb stained with purple to show that she voted amid smoke and gunfire. Interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi himself says, "(This is) the first time the Iraqis will determine their destiny."

Well, yes and no.

The yes is patent. Free elections are a boon to a nation, particularly where they are taken seriously. And nothing can be more serious than people defying threat to life and limb to be able to vote. We had that, too, almost two decades ago this year, during the "snap elections" of January 1986, people trooping to the polls amid the threat of violence from Marcos' henchmen.

But the no is just as patent as the yes. If the Iraqi elections truly represented democracy, the first thing the Iraqis would be deciding, well before whom they want their prime minister to be, is whom they want to run their country. The first question they should be answering, well before whether or not they want their interim prime minister to remain in power, is whether or not they want the Americans to remain in their country. That is the one question staring not just Iraq but the world in the face, but that is the one question the Iraq elections are not asking.

The essence of democracy is freedom. No freedom, no democracy. The concept of freedom at the margins, or a limited freedom within the confines of occupation, is not democracy, it is hypocrisy. A longer chain does not make for democracy, it only makes going to the prison john easier.

The concept of an "imposed democracy" is a contradiction in terms. One country cannot invade another and force democracy down the throats of its citizens. Democracy doesn't thrive in those conditions, only resentment does. Not least because history has yet to record a country that invaded another at great cost to itself in life and money for altruistic ends. On the contrary, history records those invasions to arise from selfish motives and result in a tyranny worse than the one they end. Indeed, even if the occupation were wrought for altruistic motives, democracy would still not sprout from it like skeletons from the Hydra's teeth. Democracy is choice, or it is nothing at all. One country determining what is good for another is not freedom, it is fiat.

You do not have to look very far to see what happens when you "impose democracy." The Philippines is Exhibit A. The reasons George W. Bush used to justify invading Iraq were the same reasons William McKinley used to justify invading the Philippines (Bush has quietly dropped any reference to weapons of mass destruction, which has become embarrassing). That is the "White Man's Burden," also called "manifest destiny," which is the duty of countries like America to bring civilization to the uncivilized. That that is a monumental presumption, of course, never occurred to them. Gandhi said it best. When asked, "What do you think of Western civilization?" he answered, "I think it would be a very good idea."

The result of American rule in the Philippines has been to produce a schizophrenic country, a country that is democratic in form but autocratic in substance, a country that is free and egalitarian in ritual but is slavish and iniquitous in essence. It is a country that enjoys free elections and a free press, which may not be sneered at—they are true harbingers of democracy. The worst elections, one where the choice is limited to *trapos* or entertainers, are better than no elections at all. And the most cantankerous press is better than a muzzled one. To see the virtues of the first, one need only compare martial law with what went after. The worst of what went after is still better than the best of martial law.

But this same country is one that is unequal in the extreme and free only to obey Washington's bidding. It is a country where pockets of affluence float in a sea of utter destitution. It is a country where one set of law applies to the rich and another to the poor. It is a country where taxes take on the aspect of tribute, or *balato*, to public officials, and where public officials are free to collect them as their due. It is a country that, so long as it has free elections and a free press, feels free to oppress its people, who respond by fleeing to other shores.

It is the logical consequence of "imposing democracy." It is the contradictory result of a contradiction in terms. You teach someone the meaning of liberty after enslaving him, and he will learn the meaning of liberty only with his head and not with his heart. You teach someone the meaning of equality after oppressing him and he will learn only the formal properties of equality and not its substance. You teach someone the meaning of fraternity after making him a stranger in his own country, and he will learn only to say the word "brother" and not mean it.

The other choice is to resist. They now call the Iraqis who are fighting the American occupation of their country troublemakers and terrorists. That's what they called Sakay too

Tell-tale signs of economic turnaround

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

THE SCARCITY of good economic news in the Philippines is such that the report of the National Statistical Coordination Board that the economy grew 6.1 percent in 2004 gave the administration a reason to claim the economy is on the road to a turnaround.

A week ago, the peso rallied for four days against the US dollar, hitting 55.13 to a dollar last Thursday, its strongest appreciation during the last 12 months. The administration interpreted the strong peso as a vote of confidence in its economic management from foreign and local investors.

These signs of economic turnaround are at best tell-tale and they have been received with mixed reaction by some business sectors, some of which have cautioned that there should be further indications that the growth is sustainable. It's too early to celebrate, is the word of caution from some quarters, including Governor Rafael Buenaventura of the Bangko Sentral, who said the economy was still fragile.

According to the NSCB, the gross domestic product (GDP) growth last year was the fastest since the 6.2 percent growth in 1989 and surpassed the 4.7 percent of 2003. With regard to the gross national product (GNP), the administration claimed the 2004 growth was the fastest since the 7.6 percent expansion in 1996 and exceeded the 5.6 percent growth in 2003.

The NSCB report said services accounted for 47 percent of total GDP, and contributed the most to the GDP growth with 3.37 percentage points. Industrial growth rose 5.3 percent compared to 3.8 percent in 2003. Industry accounted for about 33 percent of GDP and contributed 1.77 percentage points to the total GDP growth rate. Agriculture, fishery and forestry posted the smallest growth rate relative to the rate in the services and in industry, with 4.9 percent, up from 3.8 percent in 2003.

From another perspective, the economy expanded by 0.6 percent in the fourth quarter last year, its slowest growth in three years, although the 2004 annual growth rate was the highest in 15 years.

Although growth in agriculture was relatively slower, the Makati Business Club found the growth rate a "big surprise," in view of the series of typhoons last year and unsettling political events, notably the presidential election that affected output across all sectors.

Thomas Crouch, country director of the Asian Development Bank, noted that GDP grew for the third successive year since 2001, but pointed out that growth and other positive developments since late last year "provides a platform to move from the recent fields of frustration to oases of opportunity that undoubtedly exist."

The most pointed warning against complacency came from Buenaventura, who said that "we should not rest on what we have accomplished so far because we still have a long way to go." He said he was referring to the need to pursue aggressively the government's goals of reducing the fiscal deficit and strengthening the power sector.

He belittled the administration's capacity to press for the passage of its urgent tax reform agenda, noting that Congress has so far passed only one "quantifiable" revenue bill: the one increasing the excise tax on cigarettes and alcoholic drinks, which is estimated to raise P15 billion in additional revenue a year.

Buenaventura said the 6.1 percent GDP growth rate should have been higher compared with the faster growth rates of Asian economies. He said the growth "is very good considering we had a difficult economic environment last year," and "shows the Philippine economy continues to be resilient," but it is still not good enough.

Ernesto Pernia, economist at the UP School of Economics, points to the big budget deficit as a constraint to government spending on infrastructure and social services.

The MBC expects GDP growth to slow this year to 5.5 percent or 6 percent. Expectations of higher inflation and higher interest could dampen growth.

In its January 2005 Executive Outlook Survey, the MBC said the business community had a "tempered" view of the economy. Its survey showed that 39 percent of senior business executives polled said GDP growth would be lower than in 2004, while 35.7 percent said it would be the same as last year's.

According to the survey, 73 percent of 70 respondents predicted higher inflation this year, in the light of the fact that inflation grew 5.5 percent last year from 3 percent in 2003. The ravages of inflation on incomes, especially those of the low-income groups, have been mainly responsible for the tumbling satisfaction rating of President Macapagal-Arroyo in public opinion polls.

The business executives were unimpressed by the recent rally of the peso. Sixty percent of the respondents said they expected the peso to depreciate by 5.6 percent to the dollar in the coming months.

The survey said the outlook for investment and trade prospects remained positive though "the mood is not bullish as in 2004," with 46 percent expecting investments to increase this year.

The businessmen reacted favorably to the government's decision to expropriate Terminal 3 of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, the passage of the "sin" tax law, and the reversal by the Supreme Court of a previous ban on foreign ownership of large-scale mining, improved peace and order, and political stability.

Probably going for the government this year is that economic growth is taking place in a more stable political environment, unlike the political turbulence generated by last year's presidential election. The political outlook is less uncertain than it was last year, but businessmen are less than impressed with the government's capacity to undertake fiscal reforms.

Building communities

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

WHEN representatives of Gawad Kalinga first visited the area known as "Payatas Trese," they were nervous and apprehensive, especially upon catching sight of the resentful stares and sensing the hostility of the residents.

"We didn't trust them at first," recalls Eli, a technician who left his native South Cotabato and emigrated to Manila, eventually finding a home and a family for himself in Payatas. "We thought to ourselves that rich people like them wouldn't want to have anything to do with us," he added in Filipino.

Even if Gawad Kalinga offered them something they had long desired—land titles finally guaranteeing them ownership of their land and thus security for their homes—the folks of Payatas Trese were hard put to trust these strangers. And for good reason. Many wealthy and influential people, politicians among them, had promised them the same thing for years and yet nothing came of it. They remained "squatters."

"It took three long years but we finally got what the residents had long dreamed of," says Tony Meloto, who as a Couples for Christ leader founded Gawad Kalinga 10 years ago. Land ownership issues were cleared up through negotiations with the Quezon City government. The crying need for permanent housing and basic infrastructure like roads and sanitation was solved with the help of sponsors and of the residents themselves, who put in "sweat equity" for their houses. More important, all residents who expressed willingness to buy into Gawad Kalinga's plans were organized into neighborhood clusters and joined regular "value formation" sessions. In time, not only was Payatas Trese transformed physically, but also socially, economically and even spiritually.

In tribute to Ateneo de Manila University, whose administration, faculty, alumni and students provided the bulk of the donations, expertise and manpower that went into transforming Payatas Trese, the community was renamed the Gawad Kalinga Blue Eagle Village, one of 330 sites in the country (and five abroad) transformed and even created by the power of a simple but compelling idea.

* * *

"WE believe that it is not charity that poor people need or want but four basic things: dignity, security, quality of life and opportunity," says Meloto.

While home ownership may go a long way toward the attainment of dignity and security, quality of life is as much a function of one's environment and community while education and work with dignity open the doors of opportunity.

Though he had long been a member of Couples for Christ, Meloto says that in 1995, he was bothered enough about the problems of the country that he sought answers for the persistence of poverty in our midst. He found himself in Bagong Silang, one of the first and largest relocation sites for urban poor families in Metro Manila. Among the questions he wanted answered, said Meloto, were: "Why are we poor? And why are so many among the poor criminals?" In Bagong Silang, Meloto found himself working with young men who belonged to some of the 15 gangs in the area, all engaged in petty crime and in fighting among each other.

One of his insights, also popular among Christian Fundamentalist groups in the West, was that "poverty in the country can be traced to the failure of men to provide for and protect their families." He adds: "Our society has failed to restore the dignity of men," citing among many reasons the high unemployment rate that leaves many men frustrated and drives them to crime. A large part of the Gawad Kalinga value formation program, then, is directed toward "the healing of wounded men," though as a feminist I wonder why men should be so wounded when power structures in our society are so skewed in their favor. Whatever.

Meloto says it's the follow-up work among the beneficiary homeowners (whom he prefers to call partners), especially the months-long weekend value formation seminars, that spell the difference between Gawad Kalinga and other housing programs for the poor, such as perhaps Habitat for Humanity. "We decided early on that we were in the work of building communities and not just houses," declares Meloto.

* * *

FROM APPEARANCES alone, it would seem that Gawad Kalinga, which means "to care by giving love," has been a resounding success.

"I must have lost three pairs of rubber shoes here," recounts Ansel Beluso, a Gawad Kalinga volunteer at the Blue Eagle Village, pointing to a road bisecting the community that once was a miasma of mud and rough stones during the rainy season, such that residents had to wrap their shoes in plastic bags when they left their homes. Today, the area is crisscrossed with roads paved with tiles cut from pre-formed concrete, while properly laid drainage systems ensure they will be flood-free.

The "GK houses," built from a template design and using affordable but sturdy materials, stand in clusters, painted in virtually all colors of the rainbow, what Meloto calls "the colors of hope." Flower and ornamental borders and gardens add to the pleasant ambience.

In the Blue Eagle Village, the residents were able to get their homes for free mainly because the materials were donated, while the Ateneo community added to the "sweat equity" of the residents. One student even cancelled plans for a grand debut and celebrated her 18th birthday instead with GK, asking her guests to help construct a home and throwing a birthday *merienda* for the village children.

The homeowners, though, will still have to pay for their lots. After completing the 20-percent down payment (payable in six months), they will also need to pay the city government P500 a month for 15 years. It may take some time, but at least they are no longer "squatters."

Fan language

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

BEING typecast as a historical relic is an occupational hazard. My students probably assume, from my lectures, that Rizal and Bonifacio were my classmates in kindergarten. When I annotate some hazy old photographs, coaxing out a sense of life in the late 19th-century Philippines, they marvel how I can do it if I hadn't lived in the past.

I bring new light into required readings by highlighting lusty passages in "Noli Me Tangere" and ask if the sexual undertones are really in the text or merely another example of Ambeth Ocampo over-reading. In Chapter 25 Maria Clara and her friends are wading in a river searching for heron's nests believed to make people who held them invisible. Here was a brief description of Maria Clara that made me remember Nick Joaquin who insisted that Rizal was so enamored of his tragic heroine that his language turns mushy and romantic whenever Maria Clara enters the scene:

"At last, Maria Clara emerged from the bath accompanied by her friends, fresh as a rose opening its petals with the first dew, covered with sparks of fire from the early morning sun. Her first smile was for Crisostomo, and the first cloud on her brow for Padre Salvi…"

A few paragraphs before earlier, we find the friar hiding in the bushes and this is what he sees (quotations are from the translation by Soledad Lacson-Locsin):

"Their legs were wet up to the knees, the wide folds of their bathing skirts outlining the gracious curves of their thighs. Their hair hung loose and their arms were bare. They wore striped gay-colored blouses…Pale and motionless, the religious Actaeon watched this chaste Diana: his sunken eyes glistening at the sight of her beautifully molded white arms, the graceful neck ending in a suggestion of a bosom. The diminutive rosy feet playing in the water aroused strange sensations and feelings in his impoverished, starved being and made him dream of new visions in his fevered mind."

The above texts reflect what was considered sexually attractive in those days: bare arms, a good neck or nape, tiny rosy feet. These appear very tame compared to the present when you can find more flesh and steamy action in magazines or pirated VCDs. Rizal's daring seems corny in comparison with Xerex Xaviera but one can see that there is value in leaving some things to the imagination.

For many students raised on heavily edited high school texts (or chapter summaries or, much worse, the badly drawn black and white *komiks* version) like the above, are like a revelation. Rizal can be seen in a new light: he could be funny and he could actually laugh, unlike all the glum and brooding monuments we have of him all over the archipelago.

When people take the trouble to read through Rizal's texts, they get a revelation. We can never shake off the national hero bit and that makes reading him an imposition, an obligation of a good citizen. I tell my classes that Rizal's greatest misfortune was becoming our national hero. If he had not been so exalted, maybe more people would read him for pleasure and learn more about the past and themselves.

There is something about the late 19th century that made things more interesting: the use of codes and symbols, which probably made people more aware of things below the surface. For example, the most common gadget Filipinos have these days is the cell phone. It comes in all shapes and sizes. It comes in a rainbow of colors and can be customized and accessorized into something mildly fashionable by hanging charms on them or even putting them inside various sheaths from something as ordinary as used eye or sunglass boxes to Louis Vuitton key holders minus the keys. These things transmit voice, fax, e-mail and even pictures. What would our history have been like if our heroes had the same gadgets a century ago?

Things were indirect then, social etiquette restrictive. In the wonderful opening chapter of the "Noli," Rizal describes the living room segregated by sex, with men on one side and women on the other. Ibarra says the women, "open their mouths to suppress yawns, but cover their faces instantly with their fans, scarcely making a sound. Whatever attempts at conversation are ventured dwindle into monosyllables, like the sounds one hears at night, caused by rats and lizards. Is it, perhaps the different images of Our Lady hanging from the wall between the mirrors, which makes them silent and assume a religious composure; or are the women here an exception?"

A Filipino gentleman in Rizal's time would have to be conversant with the non-verbal language used by women, and I don't mean texting. Communication was discreetly made through the main feminine accessories of the time—not cell phones, but fans and handkerchiefs. If a woman covered half her face with her fan, she meant "Follow me." If she counted the ribs it meant "I want to talk to you" If she carried the fan on the right hand, she was saying "I want to have a lover," if on the left, "I'm already taken." To fan herself briskly did not mean it was hot, but rather "I have great love for you." To fan slowly was to say, "You mean nothing to me." And to put the fan away meant "I don't want to be courted." Worst was to close the fan suddenly which said, "I hate you."

So when you re-read the "Noli," look out for other clues and know that the women once described as *mahinhin* were more daring than we think. If only they were not so repressed.

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

Remembrances of scents past

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

WHAT would life be like if we described the odors around us in a dichotomy: *mabango* (good smelling) and *mabaho* (bad smelling)? Simpler yes, but oh so much more dull.

So in Tagalog we've come up with many more olfactory terms: *mabantot, mapanghi, masangsang, malansa, mahalimuyak* and many more adjectives. I'm not going to even attempt to translate those into English, inviting my foreign readers to ask Filipinos to describe the fine nuances around each term. Limiting ourselves to the "ma-" Tagalog smelly adjectives alone, we could easily generate more than 20. If we use "*amoy*" as a suffix, for example "*amoy-baby*" (smelling like a baby), the possibilities expand to infinity.

We tend to sniff and smell everything, from the food we pick up in the canteen to people around us. Having done that, we then resort to our linguistic arsenal to pass judgement on the smells. Certainly, we're not the only smell-oriented society in the world, but it's fascinating to look at how Filipinos deal with smells.

Social smelling

Smells divide and distinguish us from others. The upper classes use odors to distinguish themselves from the unwashed masses (note the English use of that term, which comes close to being smell-oriented) as women do of men (and, not as rarely as you think, men of women). Filipinos are notorious, too, for using smells to put down other ethnicities. My students have mentioned, for example, "*amoy Kano*," "*amoy Arabo*," even "*amoy Intsik*." When I perk up and ask, in mock indignation, what *amoy Intsik* is, they beg off, saying it's difficult to describe. You know it's *amoy Intsik* when you smell it, I am assured, but I have not been able to decipher the term, at least not by sniffing myself.

Unfortunately, for all our self-consciousness around smells, we don't usually know what we smell like, except when we're truly exhilaratingly … or abysmal. Smells are eminently social, becoming meaningful only when at least two people are involved. I said earlier that smells divide, but they bring people together, too.

Like the Americans, Filipinos practically shower in colognes and perfumes. For lower-income groups, heavily scented soaps are preferred since these substitute for the more expensive scents. The exaggerated smells seem to work as mating calls; several of my male friends claim they've been approached by women who ask, "Is that Paco Rabanne you're using?"

Now if you successfully snare someone with that olfactory pick-up line, you might find yourself describing him later to friends with the superlative, oh he is so *mabangong mabango*. I'm not sure it works out as appropriately in English, to describe the love of our life as "smelling so good."

Evocative smells

Let me repeat here that we're not the only smell-oriented culture. In fact, I'd say that all humans attach importance to smells, although the degree of cultural expression varies. If I can shift to biology here, across millions of years we gradually lost our sense of smell relative to many animals. Look at dogs: they use smells to locate food and friends, to mark territory (male urination), to find or attract a mate. With humans, as we developed our complex brains, the sense of smell became less prominent in our lives, giving way to sight and hearing.

Nevertheless, we would have gone extinct if we had completely lost our olfactory sense. Smells allow us to detect danger (I have no doubts that in our ancient hunting gathering past, our ancestors could smell the prey, as well as smell enemies from afar). Today in the 21st century, we still use our sense of smell for more mundane activities, like checking the food if it's spoiled.

The title of my column today takes off from French novelist Marcel Proust's "The Remembrances of Things Past." Smells are powerful in evoking memories, and in a very specific way. The smell of spoiled mussels for example reminds us of the explosive diarrhea we had when we ate something similar 20 or 30 years ago, warning us, "Don't eat."

It wasn't surprising that the 2004 Nobel Prize for medicine went to Richard Axel and Linda Buck for their research on the sense of smell. This is not the place to go into details but briefly, the two researchers discovered the gene pool containing blueprints for sensors in the nose. They were able to unravel the way we discriminate smells, the average individual able to recognize up to 10,000 separate odors.

Culture and smells

As an anthropologist, I'm fascinated by the way biology binds us together across cultures, so that certain smells are almost universally attractive or universally repugnant. At the same time, there's a whole multitude of smells that elicit different reactions in different cultures. Generally, new or unfamiliar smells seem to set off defense reactions. Before the cultivation of Mediterranean herbs became popular here, I took sprigs of rosemary to a class at the University of the Philippines and passed it around. Most of my students at that time reacted negatively, "*Ugh, mabaho*." These days, with the fad around aromatherapy and herbs, more Filipinos react positively.

Generally, Filipinos prefer strong scents in colognes and perfumes and in air fresheners. Which can be a problem for people like myself, who prefer more nuanced scents. I find air fresheners an assault on the sense of smell, especially the ones in cars, which I find too acrid, *amoy ihi* (smelling of urine). There really ought to be a law requiring public establishments to ask the permission of clients before they spew out noxious fumes, which are now known to be serious enough to cause migraines in people who are extra sensitive to smells.

My point is that there are cultural differences in the way we smell, and describe those smells. English is relatively poor in olfactory terms, using more similes ("You smell like…"). Despite this relative linguistic poverty, the power of scents still wafts through English. I never forgot an article in the International Herald Tribune describing the Paris Metro (subway) at the end of the day as "smelling of day-old sweat." The phrase has returned to haunt me many times late in the afternoon, at the most unguarded moments, when I'm in Manila's Light Rail Transit or in the lobby of Palma Hall at UP. Mind you, it's neither pleasant or unpleasant, this day-old sweat smell, but it does evoke, for me, memories of good times with friends, of my own student days.

Maybe I'm being too ethnocentric in saying English is linguistically poor when it comes to odors. Whatever the language, a good storyteller, a good writer, should be able to draw on whatever's available to capture, even if only weakly, the scintillating, the sensuous, the sensual in our scents.

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On playing 'Tonto' to 'Lone Ranger'

The government proudly claims that the Philippines has been elected chair of a special committee against terrorism. This is fatuous, to say the least. The nation doesn't have the capacity to meet its obligations under this position. We do not have the resources. Our budget can hardly provide for the people's basic needs.

We are crowing over our being chosen to lead the fight against terror. We committed to send troops to Iraq even before we were formally asked to join the Coalition of the Willing. This is all bravado. Senators Rodolfo Biazon and Joker Arroyo say we do not get any meaningful or substantial benefits from the United States by playing "Tonto" to the "Lone Ranger" of the world.

We cannot help but ask: Is our position on terrorism realistic? Does it serve ultimately our best interests as a weak or impoverished nation? The answer is obvious.

—NELSON D. LAVIÑA,
nlavina@lycos.com

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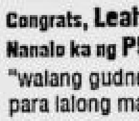

LETTERS PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

What lion's share?

IN HIS column "On meddlesome priests and gullible nuns" (Business Section, PDI, 1/17/05) Honesto C. General said: "With the foreigner sinking all the money and taking all the risks, the Filipino people, through the national government, gets the lion's share of the after-tax profits. What more do we want?"

General is the first mouthpiece of foreign mining interests to make that claim. Others, led by Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri, could at best point only to the jobs 100-percent foreign-owned companies would generate as they unearth—and pocket—our mineral wealth. But General failed to substantiate his claim.

First of all, how much—better still, what percentage—of the "after-tax profits" of the 100-percent foreign-owned companies would be the Filipino people's "lion's share"? Under what law or jurisprudence, if any, is this profit-sharing scheme provided for?

Instead of subjecting priests and nuns to an unprovoked exercise in name-calling, General would do the nation a distinct service by giving categorical answers to these questions.

—AMADO GAT INCIONG,
Unit 301 Union Square
Condominium,
145 15th Avenue,
Cubao, Quezon City

Erap was no tyrant

BEING one of those who speak with President Estrada on a regular basis, I can assure Conrado de Quiros that the former is in full control of his mental faculties when he states that he is ready to take up the cudgels for our countrymen who have lost hope in a better future under the current administration. There are many—De Quiros included—who blindly believe whatever the elite and the vested interest groups say about him or his administration. But the truth is that the Filipino masses continue to look up to him for guidance and comfort, especially at a time when the regime appears to have completely overlooked their welfare and led this nation to economic collapse and wanton disregard of law.

In De Quiros' Jan. 19 column, he claimed that "the two 'Edsas'... were led by a burning desire to end tyranny and reclaim the hope that had been stolen from us." There is no truth to the statement. President Estrada won the 1998 presidential elections with the widest margin ever recorded in Philippine electoral history. The masses who voted him into office were never consulted about the coup which was hatched by his political enemies. Contrary to De Quiros' claims, it was not the sovereign will of the people that led to President Estrada's ouster, but the will of a few who could not bear the thought of a President attending to the needs of the many above the caprices of a powerful few.

Jueteng? The elite and Jaime Cardinal Sin abhorred *jueteng* under Erap's time. Under the Arroyo administration, it is in every nook and corner of nearly all barangays in the country. Cardinal Sin himself said he'd accept money even from the devil. CBCP legal counsel Jo Imbong admitted before Congress that the Church accepts gambling money. De Quiros should think about doing his share in stopping this hypocrisy.

Corruption? Today the Philippines is ranked second among the most corrupt countries in the world. (In Erap's time, the Philippines was ranked 54th.) And not one of his Cabinet members was involved in any scandal or scam.

Today, the INQUIRER itself is the chronicle of the wanton scams and scandals perpetrated in the last four years under the very nose of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

On the Filipinos' losing hope in Estrada's administration, De Quiros must be referring to the powerful few who could not sway him with their influence-peddling ways. (Remember the Mark Jimenez exposé on a sovereign-guaranteed IPP?) Certainly De Quiros could not be referring to the Filipino masses, the millions of unnamed, faceless individuals who continue to pin their hopes for a better future on him. It is for them that President Estrada continues to fight. If some members of the media regard his crusade with skepticism and disdain, that is something he can live with.

—DIDAGEN P. DILANGALEN,
spokesperson for President
Joseph Ejercito Estrada,
former representative, First
District, Maguindanao

Aglipay merely doing his job

SEN. JINGGOY Estrada's call for PNP chief Edgardo Aglipay to resign quite baffles me.

I do understand that visiting ailing friends and relatives is part of our culture. I can therefore appreciate the request made by the senator to Aglipay that well-wishers be allowed to visit former President Estada right after his return to Tanay from Hong Kong.

However, we should also understand that this was not a simple case of visiting an ailing person. The Tanay rest house is also Erap's place of incarceration and the circumstances at that time indicated a high level of security risk. It was Aglipay's job to manage the risk and he would have been negligent had he exposed the former president to even the slightest level of danger. It is commendable to have public servants who risk the ire of our politicians in order to perform their jobs properly.

Now, if there were plans to use Erap's return to ignite public disturbance, then the more was Aglipay justified in not granting the request. In either case, Aglipay was merely doing the job he swore to do.

What is more baffling is the reaction of some opposition senators who threaten to withhold the PNP's budget to get back at Aglipay. Is this the kind of behavior we can expect from our elected officials? It is alarming that our supposedly wise lawmakers cannot see the difference between "personal" and "official." Indeed, this is one facet of Philippine politics we can all live without.

—FERNANDO Y. ROXAS,
associate professor,
Asian Institute of Management,
Makati City

Philippine Pediatric Society, Inc.
In the Service of Filipino Child

INFORMATION BULLETIN ON MENINGOCOCCEMIA

What is Meningococcemia?

Meningococcemia is a disease caused by the spread of the bacteria Neisseria meningitides through the bloodstream, causing severe signs and symptoms. The most deadly form of meningococcal infection is fulminant meningococcemia, which consists of fever, rash, and low blood pressure, leading to death.

What are the signs and symptoms of Meningococcemia?

The signs and symptoms are rapidly progressive, includes fever, chills, body weakness, cough, and sore throat. There is also a rash which may start as pinpoint reddish lesions on the legs and arms, later becoming larger and appearing like bruises. The patient may or may not have signs of meningitis such as stiff neck, convulsion, delirium, and vomiting.

How does meningococcal disease spread? How soon after exposure to the bacteria does one develop the signs and symptoms?

Although meningococcal bacteria are common, they do not survive for long periods outside the body. The bacteria spreads by droplet infection, direct contact with secretions from the nose and throat of an infected person, through close physical contact like coughing, sneezing, kissing, and sharing anything that has been inside an infected person's mouth (such as toothbrushes, cups, utensils, and drinking straws).

It takes between 1-10 days (usually less than 4 days) from exposure to development of the signs and symptoms.

Who is considered a close contact?

A close contact is someone who has had direct contact with saliva or secretions from the nose or throat of an infected person. These include household members or those who share a bed, those who share eating and drinking utensils, and those who have kissed the infected person. Children in the same childcare center or nursery frequently put objects into their mouths and can be considered close contacts.

What can be done to protect close contacts?

Those who are close contacts of the infected person may continue to attend school or work. However, they should receive antibiotics prescribed by their physician for their own protection.

Can meningococcemia be prevented?

In general, it is wise to avoid using anything that has been in the mouth of another person. Hygiene measures such as handwashing and maintaining a clean, well-ventilated environment, as well as adequate rest and nutrition, will improve resistance.

A vaccine is available which protects against some forms of the bacteria and may thus provide a certain degree of protection. It is usually given to persons who are at high risk of developing the disease. Your doctor should be able to advice you regarding this vaccine.

Can meningococcemia and meningitis be treated?

Early recognition of meningococcal infection and prompt treatment with penicillin G as well as supportive management greatly improves chances of survival.

*This health education campaign is made possible through a grant from Philippine Pediatric Society, Inc. – Council on Child Advocacy and Community Service, Committee on Health Education
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PAMPANGA SURVEY

Traders distrust execs on quarry

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Most businessmen in Pampanga perceived the provincial capitol's system of collection for quarry taxes as tainted with corruption, a survey by the private sector representative in the regional development council (RDC) showed.

The survey, completed on Monday, also showed that most of those polled favored contracting the state-owned Natural Resources Development Corp. (NRDC) as a collecting agent of quarry taxes, Rene Romero, RDC business sector representative, told the INQUIRER on Tuesday.

Survey forms were distributed to 418 businessmen but only 335 of them accomplished the forms.

At least 85 percent of the respondents wanted the NRDC to oversee collections. Between 10 and 12 percent did not specify any agency but wanted the government to stop corruption.

The rest reserved comments until they knew the proposed system of check and balance but, nevertheless, wanted corruption stopped.

The survey was done a week after the Pampanga provincial board, voting 7-3, trashed Resolution No. 1 giving Gov. Mark Lapid the authority to enter into an agreement with the NRDC and deputizing the corporate agency of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources as the provincial government's collecting arm.

The proposed resolution was defeated even as Vice Gov. Joseller Guiao certified it as urgent. Guiao revealed alleged anomalies in the sand quarrying industry and noted the disparities in income.

Guiao referred to the P382.5 million the NRDC collected from 1999 to 2001 and the P45.1 million the office of the provincial treasurer generated from 2002 to 2004. They levied the same amount of tax, which was P300 for every truckload of sand.

"[Local businessmen] want the income to be spent on basic services and public infrastructures in support of the national government's efforts to lick the fiscal problem," Romero said, citing the responses culled from the survey done through text messages.

Some, he said, mentioned the accountability of Sen. Manuel "Lito" Lapid and his successor, his son Gov. Mark Lapid, in the drop in revenues during their respective terms in office.

Senator Lapid declined to comment on the survey while Governor Lapid said efforts were being made to improve collections.

As chair of the quarry task force, the governor set this year's target at P30 million, lower by P6 million from NRDC's proposed minimum income of P36 million.

The governor called Guiao's allegations as "intrigue."

Romero said the survey was done in preparation for discussions at RDC, a policy-making body composed of government agencies, local governments and the private sector.

Respondents also gave these views:

- "The Local Government Code (of 1991) supports Lapid's position. There's nothing wrong with the law. Apparently, the problem is with [the] officials implementing it. Let's file criminal cases if there's evidence of corruption."
- "Maybe the government could hire a third party to run quarrying collections side-by-side with a government agency… Maybe the extra cost of third-party contractor could be defrayed by an increase in collections…"

Govs' group backs VAT hike for poor

By Joey A. Gabieta
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—Legislators who voted in favor of a bill that would increase value-added taxes to 12 percent found themselves defending their positions yesterday as the country's organization of governors came out in support of the VAT hike amid protests.

Leyte Rep. Remedios Petilla said she voted in favor of the measure because the increase would "benefit the nation."

"We should help our national government raise the needed funds. And with this measure, there would be no doubt that we could achieve it," she said, dismissing allegations that her vote made her "anti-people."

In a press statement, the League of Provinces, the organization of governors in the country, said they supported the VAT increase and urged senators to approve the bill.

"As local leaders, we view with concern the hard-line position taken by some of our senators even before hearing the views of economists, tax experts and nongovernment organizations that have seriously studied the VAT proposal," said league spokesperson Gov. Ben Evardone of Eastern Samar.

The Bayan Muna in Eastern Visayas has expressed dismay at the region's 12 legislators who voted in favor of the VAT increase.

Melvin Anino, regional secretary-general of the Bayan Muna-EV, said these congressmen should have rejected the measure.

"This only means that they don't really care about the plight of their poor constituents," he said.

On Monday, about 100 Bayan Muna members staged a rally at the Old Bus Terminal on Quezon Boulevard in this city to denounce the VAT hike.

Evardone also urged President Macapagal-Arroyo to use revenue from the VAT increase for pro-poor projects.

Gov tells traders: Deal with province

CITY OF MALOLOS—Bulacan Gov. Josefina de la Cruz urged investors in the province to transact business directly with the provincial government to avoid being harassed by some local officials who demand grease money in exchange for permits needed by their firms.

De la Cruz aired the appeal following a complaint from a group of investors that some officials of Bocaue town had demanded P10 million to speed up the release of permits and clearances for an industrial estate project.

She said the provincial government has set up a "one-stop shop" for investors where they can apply for all permits and licenses needed in their businesses.

The system, she said, was established through a memorandum of agreement (MOA) between the provincial government and the mayors of Bulacan's 22 towns and two cities.

De la Cruz said the MOA shared the powers of local governments in issuing licenses and permits to hasten the processing of investments and business operations in the province.

She said the owners of World Wood Trading Corp. and the Centerpoint Real Estate Construction Corp., the firms behind the construction of the Bocaue Golden City Business Park, were not aware of the MOA and this could be the reason they dealt with the local government.

On Saturday, officials of Golden City accused Bocaue Vice Mayor Kennedy Valdez and members of the town council of demanding P10 million from them in exchange for the issuance of permits and other documents that the investors would need in establishing the industrial park here.

Valdez denied claims that he and members of the Bocaue council had asked P10 million from the investors. *Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Cebu City hospital loses all of its 4 surgeons

By Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—Four surgeons at the Cebu City Medical Center resigned on Monday, preventing the city government-run hospital from handling major surgical cases.

Doctors Gay Agcaoili, Fadzullah Taalim, Sonny Olovida and Dale Raza pushed through with their plan to resign after hearing the comment of Mayor Tomas Osmeña that they were inefficient.

When sought for comment yesterday, Osmeña said the city would find other surgeons to replace the four who had resigned.

"Sorry if they got hurt (by my remark). I'm not going to handle them like 10-year-old babies. We will hire new people who don't have that kind of problem," the mayor said in a phone interview.

With their resignation, medico-legal cases such as victims of shootings and stabbings would have to be referred to the Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center.

CCMC medical director Felicitas Manaloto said she made a temporary arrangement with the Don Vicente Sotto hospital because of the lack of surgeons at the CCMC.

The surgeons announced their plan to resign last week due to their heavy workload at the hospital.

Manaloto said the CCMC should have at least 12 surgeons. But since there were only four, she said they had to work 24 hours every other day.

Instead of resting the next day, she added the surgeons had to report for duty due to scheduled operations.

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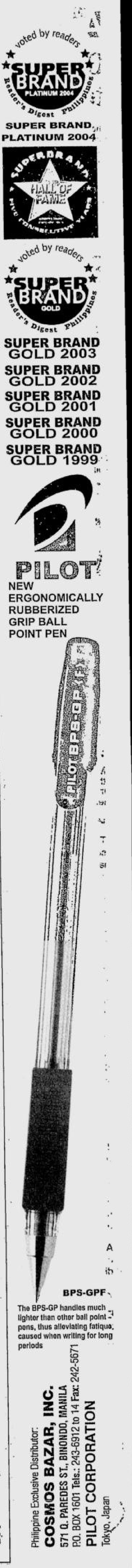

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NDF turns down Red Cross call for ceasefire

LUCENA CITY—The National Democratic Front has turned down the Philippine National Red Cross' call for a six-month ceasefire between government forces and New People's Army rebels in the seven most typhoon-ravaged municipalities of northern Quezon and Aurora.

Luis Jalandoni, NDF peace panel chair, said the NDF must ensure the safety of its communities and protect its mass organizations.

"Therefore, it does not agree to a prolonged ceasefire for relief and rehabilitation work in calamity-stricken areas. There is no reason for the presence of US or government troops in these areas. Civilian agencies and people's organizations can very well do the relief and rehabilitation work," he said in an e-mailed statement in response to a query.

Proposal

Last month, Sen. Richard Gordon, PNRC chair, proposed a cessation of armed hostilities between the NPA and government forces to allow relief operations in calamity-stricken areas, most of which are rebel-torn.

"It has been more than three weeks since our call was made, but the government and NDF have yet to make known their official decisions, if any, on this call," he said.

Gordon urged the government and the NDF to jointly or separately "take a first bold step in the interest of rehabilitation, peace and the people."

"We implore them to look at the matter more farsightedly, beyond their respective tactical military considerations and beyond the current absence of hostilities in the area," he said.

Gordon said any area that was contested was always vulnerable to hostilities as the fighting units of both sides were very mobile.

"This is not the first and the last time that there will be calamities and calamity areas that are also war zones. We might as well work out humanitarian ceasefires now rather than regret later not having done so when we had the chance," the senator said.

Suspicion

But Jalandoni expressed apprehension that a prolonged ceasefire in calamity-stricken areas would be used by the government as a license to enter NDF territory and attack revolutionary forces and the people.

He claimed that the NDF was aware of rebel experience in Mindanao, where the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police, they said, repeatedly violated their ceasefire agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front by claiming they were running after so-called terrorists or criminals.

He said as a matter of principle, the NDF undertakes all efforts possible to provide assistance to communities adversely affected by calamities. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Greetings from The Filipino Chinese Executive Committee
HAPPY CHINESE NEW YEAR
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THE LUNAR new year ushers in new hope for Baguio to recover from a bout with meningococcemia, which city officials said resulted in a sharp drop in tourism revenues.

TOOTS SOBERANO/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

Towns near Baguio get crumbs in antimeningo funds

BAGUIO CITY—The Department of Health has poured all of its resources into rescuing the social, as well as commercial, viability of the country's summer capital to help it recover from meningococcemia.

But crumbs apparently are all the city's neighboring towns, where cases of the fatal meningitis strain have been reported, will get, according to a Benguet town mayor.

As of Monday, government doctors said no new cases had been added to one suspected and three confirmed meningococcemia cases in Benguet, and two new suspected cases in Mt. Province from Jan. 24 to 26.

Baguio is still dealing with three confirmed meningococcemia cases out of 11 that have been recorded for the year, although health officials have already downgraded its alert status.

Itogon Mayor Mario Godio said his town is now coping with the stigma suffered by Baguio, now that Benguet is addressing 18 suspected cases starting January, while Mt. Province is addressing 21 suspected cases.

Paranoia

Baguio suffered an 80-percent drop in tourist arrivals during the Christmas holidays, the city's peak tourism period, due to paranoia brought on by the disease, according to the Department of Tourism.

Godio said Itogon is dealing with talks supposedly identifying Itogon as the source of the disease that hit Baguio.

He said thieves broke into the Benguet General Hospital and took a box of antibiotics that government health personnel gave to some Baguio residents to fight off the disease.

He said the DOH kept the theft under wraps "to avoid embarrassment."

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit released P500,000 to the city but most of the amount had gone to buying medicines, according to the office of the city administrator.

Working with the remaining budget for 2004, the DOH managed to supply 13 Benguet towns with 25 to 30 capsules of the antibiotic ciprofloxacin and three to five bottles of rifampicin each, said Dr. Oliver Guadana, Itogon health officer, during a Tuesday press conference here.

Insufficient

"So during our contact tracing... *kulang na iyon* (that was not enough)," he said.

"I don't know if [Guadana] listened to me, but I asked him to buy ascorbic acid [instead]... [Government doctors said] all we need to do is build up the [immune system]," Godio said. *Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Outgoing energy chief urges oil companies to lower LPG prices

DAVAO CITY—Resigned Energy Secretary Vince Perez is calling on oil companies to roll back the prices of cooking gas (liquefied petroleum gas or LPG) following a decrease in world prices from $424 per metric ton in December to only $389 per metric ton in January.

Perez, who said he was elated over the economy's 6.1-percent growth despite the rising prices of oil in the world market last year, is now calling on oil companies to enforce a rollback on prices of cooking gas.

"We're calling on companies for the rollback of LPG prices in February, following this downward trend in the world prices," Perez said during the launching of the Philippine Energy Plan (PEP) here yesterday.

"We don't say how much the companies should roll back, we leave it up to the industry to decide," Perez told reporters.

Deregulated

Government has deregulated the oil industry, leaving prices at the whim of the market. But Perez said oil companies have heeded government's call in the past to roll back prices of oil.

This included a 50-centavo oil discount for public transport groups implemented in late November last year and a price rollback of LPG at P1 each, the latest of which was the P1-per-kilogram cut implemented at the beginning of this year.

But Perez said he was happy that despite the rising prices of oil in the previous year, the economy was able to post a 6.1-percent growth in gross national product, exceeding the five-percent growth target last year.

"Oil prices in the world market rose by as much as 35 percent last year," Perez said. "But despite this, we were able to post a 6.1-percent growth. We were suffering from the high prices of oil along with other countries like Nigeria, Argentina, even US and China, but still, we managed to exceed growth targets. This only means that our economy can survive external shocks."

Solutions

Aside from laying down solutions to the country's energy requirements in the next 10 years, the PEP also seeks to lessen dependence on imported oil by developing alternative fuels, like natural gas and ethanol, for the domestic transport sector. *Germelina A. Lacorte, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Batangas City mayor cries foul over crime links

BATANGAS CITY—Mayor Eduardo Dimacuha and his family cried foul over a story linking them to the operations of a crime syndicate in the province.

The mayor was linked to the owner of a nightclub where police arrested suspected members of a so-called Mafia of Batangas in San Pascual town Sunday.

Six policemen were hurt in a clash with suspected members of a kidnap group that led to the arrest of eight gang members, including two women and their alleged leader who had a bounty of P800,000 for his capture.

The INQUIRER story mentioned the supposed owner of Klub Takuza as Jun Dimacuha, a nephew of the mayor.

"I really feel very, very hurt. I don't know how the damage can be repaired. But please, please clear my father's name from the mafia link. We've been doing everything to establish good government in Batangas City under my dad's leadership and the undue linkage to the mafia activities was very unfair for us," lawyer Reginald Dimacuha, the mayor's son, said.

"We don't tolerate wrongdoings. In fact, we even put a stop to the operation of small street gambling," he said.

The INQUIRER quoted the statement of Batangas police provincial director Senior Supt. Francisco Montenegro, who linked Dimacuha to the club owner in a press conference Sunday.

The mayor said Jun Dimacuha, who was identified as his nephew, was his cousin.

"Jun is not my nephew, he is my cousin, the son of my uncle," the mayor said. "and even if he used to own the nightclub where the arrest was held... please don't connect that to me. It's really very unfair for me and my family."

According to Mayor Dimacuha, the city's drive against criminality has been strictly enforced under the city's police chief, Supt. Cedrick Train.

"We've been working so hard to keep this city's peace and order and to leave a legacy of good governance. It hurts us terribly to see everything we've worked for just go up in smoke because of that unfair linkage," he said. *Mei Magsino-Lubis, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Mayor survives gun attack in Jolo

JOLO, Sulu—Siasi town mayor Wilson Anni escaped unhurt but his police escort was hit in the leg when gunmen fired at them in Jolo on Monday night.

Anni was sitting at the porch of Land Transportation Office provincial chief Paraluman Munduk's house when fired upon by unidentified men.

Munduk and Anni are cousins. The mayor stays at Munduk's house whenever he is in Jolo.

Witnesses said the gunmen were on a motorcycle and in a Tamaraw van.

Police said they found 40 bullet casings from Armalite and M-14 rifles at the scene.

Senior Supt. Suaibon Jalad, Sulu police chief, said the attack could be politically motivated.

But Anni said he refuses to believe it has something to do with politics because his opponent in the last elections was a cousin, former Siasi Mayor Arthur Muksan.

Siasi is an island municipality of the second district of Sulu, several hundred miles from mainland Jolo.

Meanwhile, Brig. Gen. Gabriel Habacon, commander of the 1st Tabak Infantry Division, said two soldiers were killed while three others were wounded when members of the 53rd Infantry Battalion clashed with suspected Abu Sayyaf rebels in Barangays Kapuk and Pungol in Maimbung town in Sulu yesterday morning.

Habacon said the bandits were led by a certain Albader Parad. *Ed General and Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Subic remits ₱2.9B in taxes, duties to gov't

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT—The Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) has remitted to the national treasury P2.9 billion in cash from tax collections, including customs duties, income tax of workers and five percent gross taxes of investors from January to December 2004.

SBMA Administrator Alfredo Antonio announced on Friday that the collection performance of the Bureau of Customs (BOC) and the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) indicated "robust" economic activity here.

"To include the P1.9-billion noncash collection derived from deferred payments and government-to-government transactions, the overall combined tax collections generated by the BOC and the BIR reached P4.2 billion for 2004 or 26 percent higher than that of last year's figure of P3.9 billion," Antonio said in a statement.

He said the revenues collected by the two agencies exceeded last year's collection by P1.04 billion.

Port of Subic customs collector Marietta Zamoranos said the bureau's cash collection of P2.3 billion came from domestic and foreign ship calls, transshipment operations and the taxes and duties paid by freeport investors for the importation of heavy equipment and motor vehicles in 2004. *Allan Macatuno, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Kin of Filipina killed in Japan promised justice

By Carla P. Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—Jose Brillantes, undersecretary for migrant affairs, has assured that the Philippine Embassy in Japan is working to ensure that justice is served to the family of the former entertainer who was strangled to death by a jealous lover.

"The Philippine Embassy will monitor the police investigation and filing of charges to ensure that justice is obtained for Rona Jimenez," Brillantes said.

Jimenez, 22, of Talisay City, Negros Occidental, was strangled to death on Jan. 19 by Tatsuya Itabashi at their residence in Soka City in Saitama Prefecture, a suburb of Tokyo.

Itabashi confessed to the killing, which he claimed was done in self-defense.

Rona's family is asking the government to help them bring her body back to her home in Talisay City, about 7.3 km north of here.

Lourdes Jimenez said she wants to see the remains of her granddaughter Rona for the last time and give her a proper burial.

She said they also asked the government to bring home Rona's three-year-old daughter from her previous husband, a Japanese national, so they could take care of her.

Claro Cristobal, consul general at the Philippine Embassy in Japan, said arrangements were being made with the funeral parlor in Tokyo for the shipment of Jimenez's remains to the Philippines.

He said the embassy also asked the police in Soka City to exert pressure on Itabashi to shoulder the repatriation cost of about $4000.

Cristobal quoted Japanese police as saying they negotiated with the parents of Itabashi but they refused to cooperate since they could not afford the amount.

He said the Soka police told the embassy that they had set a meeting with Itabashi's employer for the latter to shoulder the cost.

If Itabashi's employer refuses to assume the cost of repatriating the remains of Jimenez, alternative funding will be tapped, Cristobal said.

It was the employer of Itabashi who called the police when the latter confessed that he killed Jimenez in a fit of jealousy.

JIMENEZ

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INQUIRER Northern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Rolando B. Fernandez

Baguio learns lessons from meningo crisis

By Maurice Malanes
Baguio City

BAGUIO, the mountain resort city of fond memories of honeymoons for many Filipinos, is striving to revive its economy after recently suffering the worst beating ever in 15 years. The situation has threatened to steal its longtime status of summer capital.

According to business people, the culprit for the crisis was the "overblown reports" about meningococcemia, a meningitis strain that reportedly claimed 32 lives in the Cordillera.

The reports, they say, gave potential tourists and visitors the misimpression that Baguio residents were dying left and right from the disease. Health officials stress that the disease has been a year-round sporadic occurrence, not only in Baguio but also elsewhere in the country.

The reported list of deaths and cases, which included non-meningococcemia cases such as an appendicitis patient (an engineer), helped feed public panic over the disease, says Dr. Charles Cheng.

Health-watch groups, such as the independent Chestcore (Cordillera Health, Education, Services and Training in the Cordillera Region), have pointed to "a basic lack of definite and widespread information dissemination" on the disease.

The "meningo panic," says Chestcore, revealed the city's inability to effectively and efficiently manage crisis situations. On a bigger scale, it reflects the "moribund state of the Philippine public health care system" because the government allots a measly 30 centavos per Filipino per day for health care while 40 percent of the national budget is used to pay off foreign loans, the group said.

But the blaming game is over.

Both the government and the private sector are buckling down to work to revive the local tourism-dependent economy, which, the regional tourism office says, has been losing an average of P87 million weekly since January.

Rays of hope

Seeing rays of hope after the health department lifted the public alert on the disease on Jan. 24, various sectors are coordinating activities to draw tourists and build confidence with the regional tourism office and the city government.

Among the active business groups are the Baguio Association of Hotels and Inns (Bahai) and the Baguio Association of Restaurants (Bar).

Despite the millions of pesos they have lost and continue to lose in the aftermath of the meningo panic that began last quarter of 2004, members of Bahai and Bar are upbeat about early recovery.

"We have survived the earthquake and weathered several storms; we will survive the meningo aftermath. We shall overcome," says Bahai member Michael del Rosario, referring to a 1990 earthquake which killed hundreds of people and battered Baguio's economy.

Peter Ng, another hotelier, considers the current economic crisis as the worst to happen in 15 years after the 1990 quake.

The crisis, he says, has prompted him to let three fourths of his almost 100 workers to work only three days a week for the meantime because few guests have been checking in at his hotel since December.

Having seen worst times, Bahai and Bar members are now banking on their unity and cooperation to help dispel the wrong public perception that a contagious disease has engulfed Baguio.

2 major events

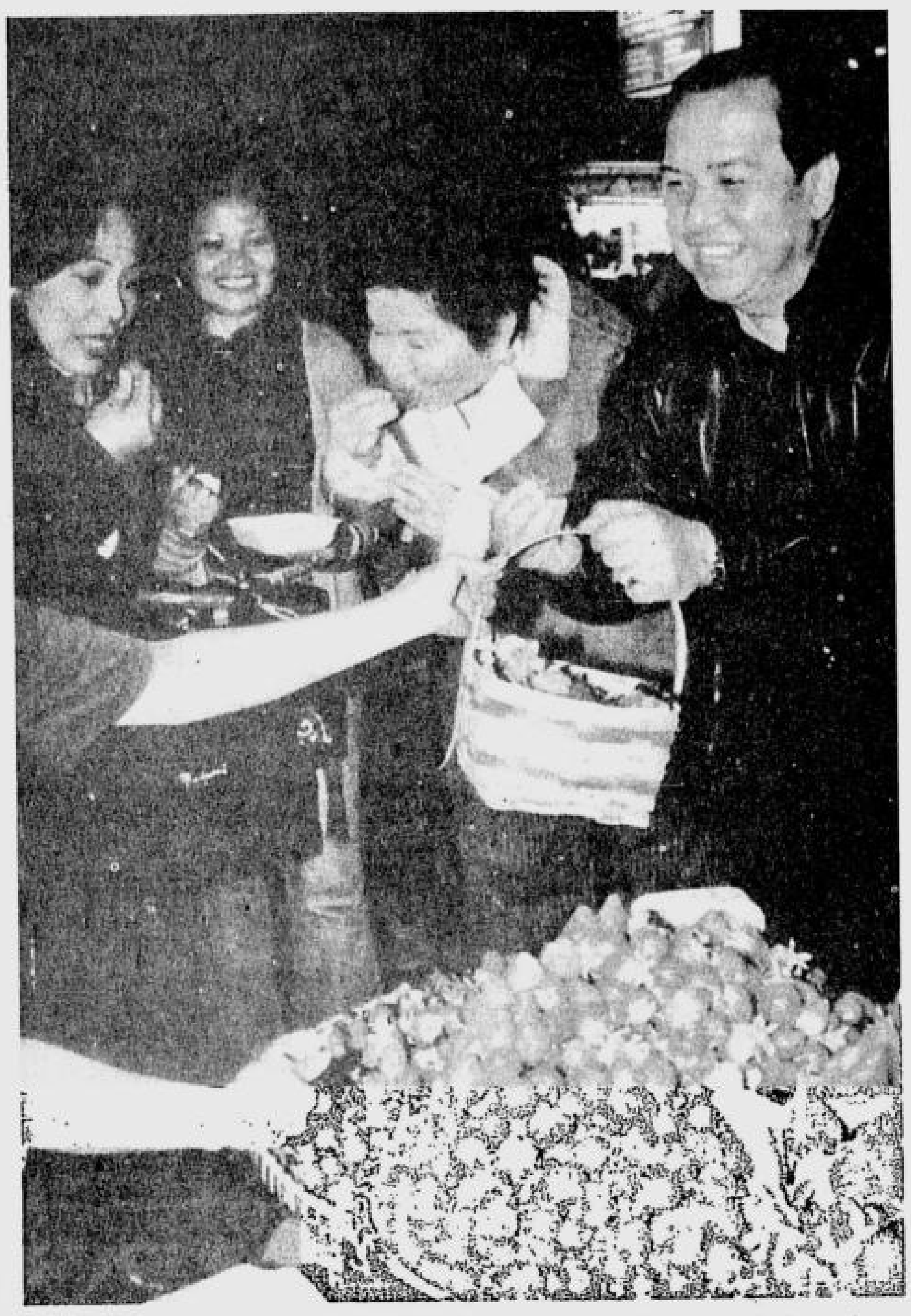
The two groups are among the driving force behind two major city events this month—the annual celebration of the Spring Festival or Chinese Lunar New Year and the Panagbenga or Baguio Flower Festival.

The Chinese New Year countdown began on Feb. 1 and culminates with a parade on Feb. 11, and the Panagbenga opens three days later with several crowd-drawing activities, such as a mass wedding of at least 100 couples on Valentine's Day.

A kissing competition will be held as an added spice to the usual street dancing and flower float parade.

Earlier, Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit advised local officials to postpone the flower festival.

"But we (Bahai and Bar members) want the flower festival to go on and show to the world that we in Baguio are not sick and dying," restaurateur Edna Anton says. "It's the economy that is sick (as a result of the meningo scare)."



SEN. RICHARD Gordon visits the Baguio public market to boost the city's resolve to attract tourists back after the meningo scare. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Besides Bahai and Bar, sports enthusiasts have embarked on what they call sports tourism to help revive tourist confidence.

National motor and car-racing champion Carlos Anton, a Baguio resident, and fellow races and sports television host Mike Potenciano have organized a national 4 x 4 car and motorcycle racing, which will be held on Feb. 12-13.

"We wish to show to the world that Baguio is still the best place for sports competitions," says Anton.

Salou Sobrepeña of Camp John Hay also wants to show to other Filipinos that Baguio, with its mountain climate and ambience, is still among the best places for art enthusiasts.

She has organized an art exhibit called "February Blooms," which features the paintings of Philip Mayoya, a gardener who dabbles in painting when he is not tending flowers or vegetables, at the John Hay Manor.

Reflections

As they count their losses from the crisis the meningo panic caused, some entrepreneurs are reflecting on the faith dimension of what befell them.

"After the 1990 earthquake, we became closer with our neighbors, and we became more united in striving to revive our city's economy," says Anton. "But after we recovered and we were making good money, we have become complacent. Maybe this (meningo crisis) is God's way of telling us not to rest on our laurels."

Besides the 1990 quake and the meningo crisis, the city had seen much worse times, says Councilor Edilberto Tenefrancia. He cited how the city's economy was also down in 1972 when it rained continuously for two months.

"At that time (1972), everyone became a worshipper of the sun, which had not shone for 40 days," he recalls.

And he notes one blessed paradox of all these crises—people coming and uniting together to overcome a problem that transcends classes and political differences.

"This (unity and coming together) only proves that the things that keep us together are greater than those that divide us," he says, citing how businessmen set aside their competitive tendencies and the politicians their political differences during crisis.

"I hope we can make this a habit in good or bad times," he says.

For regional tourism director Purificacion Molintas, one lesson from the meningo crisis is that the local tourism-based economy relies largely on the health, hygiene and sanitation of the city.

'Someday, we can have a blind Filipino grandmaster'

By Frank Cimatu
Baguio City

DAYTOY TI AMIANAN

THE AMERICAN chess legend Bobby Fischer, back when he was young and focused on his game, once touched a piece that he should not have in the opening of his game and promptly lost.

The "touch move rule" is strictly enforced in tournament games. If you touch one of your opponent's pieces, you must capture that piece. If you want to adjust the position of a piece without moving it, you must say "adjust" or "j'adube" before you touch the piece.

But last month, during a chess tournament at the People's Park in Baguio City, "touch move" was the rule. In fact, if the six players did not touch their pieces, they would have no way of playing.

This was the third Silahis ng Pasko blind chess tournament. Unlike other tournaments where players and the audience were so quiet you could hear the ticking of chess clocks, the game was so loud that one of the players was complaining that he could not concentrate.

And concentration is the key to blind chess.

Remember that scene in "Searching for Bobby Fischer" when actor Ben Kingsley, as the legendary chess teacher Ben Pandolfini, swiped the chess pieces off the board and asked the character of Josh Waitzkin to play the game? That is how the blind players play.

Joaquin Boteng, 32, a masseur at night and piano player and singer for a music lounge, said it took him a while to visualize the game in his mind.

"I have been playing for 10 years now and I still easily get distracted," he said.

Telling kibitzers who were criticizing some of the players' moves, tournament organizer Nars Padilla told them that they could play with the champion later.

Blindfolded

"As long as you play blindfolded," Padilla said. There were no takers.

To play blind chess, players use a special kind of chess set.

The official tactile chess set has the "white" squares sunken in to distinguish them from the "black." Squares are drilled with a hole into which the pieces fit. The "black" chess pieces have a pin in the top to distinguish them from the "white" pieces.

But in Baguio, it is the other way around. The "white" squares are raised. Not only are the black pieces with a pin protruding but the bases of the black pieces are also grooved to distinguish them.

Playing black, Tumapang was forced in his first game by his opponent's knight to move his king and capture his bishop.

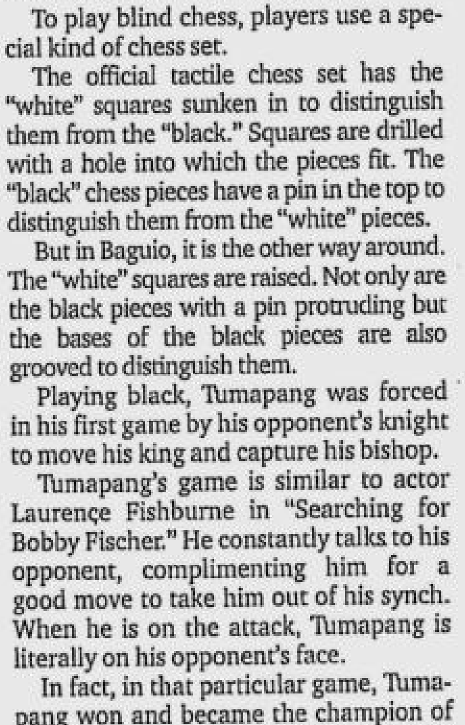
Tumapang's game is similar to actor Laurençe Fishburne in "Searching for Bobby Fischer." He constantly talks to his opponent, complimenting him for a good move to take him out of his synch. When he is on the attack, Tumapang is literally on his opponent's face.

In fact, in that particular game, Tumapang won and became the champion of the tournament three years in a row. He pocketed P1,500, while Boteng, who placed third, won P500.

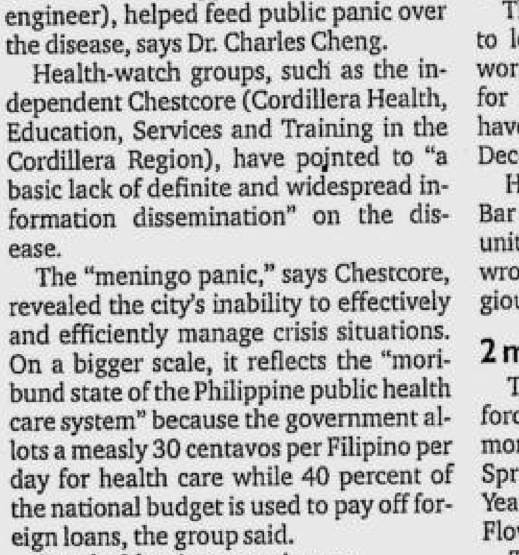
Tumapang said they lacked chessboards and professional guidance. In the United States, for example, a quarterly publication for blind players is set on cassette. There are also computer programs that speak the moves and recommend moves if necessary.

Padilla said he planned to invite chess coaches to teach the players the winning strategies. "Maybe someday we can have the first [blind] Filipino grandmaster," he said.

(THOSE who have extra chess sets they want to donate to blind players may contact Nars Padilla at 0918-3165377).



SOME Baguio residents enjoy a game of chess in one of the city's parks.



RODITA Lamarca, star performer of the Balikatan Women's Group, dances to the tune of "Sayaw, Kikay" during the recent Longganiza Festival in the City of Vigan in Ilocos Sur. EV ESPIRITU

When gays are gay in 'longganiza' fest

A GAY platoon invaded the 3rd Longganiza Festival in the ultra-conservative heritage city of Vigan and almost came out *wagi* or winners.

The Gaybelles, composed of 25 street dancers, were the crowd drawers in last month's parade and were close second to the three-time winner Balikatan Women's Group, whose star dancer had been billed as the "living *longganiza*."

The Gaybelles brought the mardi gras to the Diocese of Nueva Segovia and had the loudest applause. Twenty of them wore skimpy blue *abel Iloco* (woven Iloco cloth) g-strings and a skimpy bra made of sunflower ribbons with Vigan *longganiza* as petal.

They also wore hairdresses made of *longganiza* strands and a crown of tiger grass. They danced, high-kicked and did their leg split on the cobble-stoned Crisologo Street to the tune of the Viva Hotbabes' "Kikay," adopted as "Ciudad Vigan."

Ten men with spears of giant *longganiza* sometimes carried the Gaybelles in their dance routines. The crowd was slow to respond to the Gaybelles but later followed them from the St. Paul's Cathedral to the Vigan Heritage Village.

Vigan Mayor Ferdinand Medina said this was the first time they allowed an all-gay cast to join the street dance and the result was pure entertainment. "The crowd loved them," he said.

Medina said the Gaybelles were composed of residents and migrants who worked as designers, beauticians and professionals in Vigan and in nearby places. Some of them were winners of the Miss Gay Vigan held during the celebrations.

Ten groups of dancers participated in the parade. All wore Vigan *longganiza* as wigs, belts, necklace and fashion accessories. The sausages, of course, were replicas made of stockings, art paper and plastic, and dyed to a golden to deep brown.

Two years ago, the pieces of *longganiza* were real, but the dancers complained that they were too greasy and heavy to dance with. Last year, they had art workshops to create fake *longganiza*.

The Balikatan Women's Group, winners of the adult category, strived for color, wearing multicolored socks, blue tight skirts that looked like sausage casings, Rastafarian caps and feather masks.

Rodita Lamarca, described as the "living *longganiza*," could have won the most graceful dancer award.

The University of Northern Philippines won in the student category with its Chinese-inspired red cheongsam made from *abel Iloco* and laced with *longganiza*. *Frank Cimatu*

Cabanatuan eyes longest native sausage

CABANATUAN City wants to be known also as a "producer of the best-tasting and quality *longganiza*." And to highlight this goal, residents are displaying today ready-to-market native sausages that will stretch to at least 2.5 km.

The display, which is touted to be the longest line of *longganiza* in the country, is one of the highlights of the city's 55th founding anniversary celebration on Jan. 31-Feb.3.

"The fact is that the Cabanatuan *longganiza* is a much sought-after meat product here and we want to showcase it through the display," said Councilor Racquel Agapito, chair of the celebration.

She said the display would be longer than those assembled some years back in Laoag City, which was 2.213 km, and Makati City, which was 1.2 km.

"It will definitely be a record-setting feat," she added.

Mear vendors from the two public markets in Cabanatuan will display their products in stands arranged along the main street starting at 7 a.m.

The pieces of *longganiza*, with an average length of 9 cm and a diameter of 8 cm each, will be tied end to end to form the display line.

Agapito said the festivities would include a bamboo festival tomorrow, featuring street dancing performances by participants garbed in attire accentuated by bamboo decors and a parade of floats made of bamboo. *Anselmo Roque*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Peso breaks into 54 level

From page A1

(overseas Filipino workers) inflows," said Rovic de Guzman, chief foreign exchange dealer at Union Bank of the Philippines.

"If you've noticed, most of the stories coming out over the last two weeks have been generally positive," he said.

CalPERS staying

Ravelas said the peso's rally was buoyed by the higher gross domestic product growth and the country's passing grade given by the consultant of California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS).

CalPERS has an estimated $85 million worth of portfolio investment in the Philippines. It is the third-largest pension fund in the world, and has $172 billion worth of assets, part of which is invested in emerging markets.

CalPERS decided to stay after its consultant kept the country yesterday on the list of permissible investment sites.

Wilshire Consulting said the Philippines got passing marks in the seven basic criteria of a permissible investment site—market liquidity, political stability, transparency, productive labor practice, capital market openness, settlement proficiency and transaction cost.

Beryl Ang, a member of the government's technical staff working on convincing CalPERS to keep its investments in the country, said officials of Wilshire would meet with CalPERS on Feb. 14, when the actual score of the Philippines would be presented.

She said being on the list meant that the country got a score of at least 2 points.

"This success can be attributed to many factors foremost of which is the resolve of the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo to institute far-ranging reforms toward strengthening the country's economic and political foundations," Philippine Ambassador to the United States Albert del Rosario said in a statement.

A Philippine delegation led by Del Rosario earlier talked with officials of CalPERS and Wilshire to convince them that the country still had a good investment climate despite a negative perception brought about by its ailing fiscal sector.

Int'l accounting standards

One of the factors that boosted the country's score was the adoption of international accounting standards, which improved its score in transparency, Ang said.

Del Rosario said an effective inter-agency coordination was forged to address the concerns of Wilshire.

"Strong efforts were made by the Securities and Exchange Commission, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, Board of Accountancy and by the Professional Regulation Commission to adopt, before Dec. 31 the International Accounting Standards to increase the Philippine score in one of the factors used for the rating which is transparency," he said.

He said Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas led a delegation to Amherst, Massachusetts, "to engage third-party source Verite on still another factor which is Productive Labor Practices."

Credit downgrade

"We also led a team to meet with Standard & Poor's to improve the Philippine score in market liquidity and volatility," Del Rosario said.

Talks of a possible exclusion of the Philippines from the list of permissible investment sites arose after the country's credit rating was downgraded.

International ratings firm Standard & Poor's last month downgraded by a notch the country's foreign currency debt rating to BB- from BB, citing the country's lingering fiscal problem.

Fitch Ratings, for its part, downgraded its outlook for the Philippines from stable to negative last month, citing reasons related to the country's fiscal standing. Moody's Investors Service has yet to give its verdict on the Philippines next month, although there are fears it might follow the lead of S&P.

Investments in agro, food

Raul Hernandez, vice president of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said CalPERS expressed interest in increasing its investments in the Philippines by pouring in money into local government projects involving agriculture and food processing.

THE REBOUNDING peso hits one of its highest levels in a year as the country's economic prospects improve. ROMEO GACAD/AFP

Hernandez went to the United States as a member of a separate delegation that asked the pension fund to continue investing in the Philippines.

He went with Bulacan Gov. Josefina Mendoza-de la Cruz, and together with the rest of the delegation, they urged CalPERS to invest in projects that would boost economic activities in towns and provinces.

"Our image now will be in a better light because CalPERS is a big organization," Hernandez said. *With a report from Reuters*

Critics to GMA: What growth? Growth for whom?

From page A1

It attributed the increased GDP to the services sector, which it found to have contributed the most with 3.37 percentage points. It named the top contributors as trade, transportation, communications and storage, and private services.

But a skeptical San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito, a son of ousted President Joseph Estrada, suggested that the figures had been sexed up.

"[Administration officials] are so happy with mere numbers," Ejercito said on the phone. "Numbers can be window-dressed to make it appear [that the economy is doing OK]."

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri was quick to reply to a request for comment.

"The NSCB has a squeaky-clean reputation. [Its members] are reliable resource persons on statistics. You can ask any reputable economist in the country," he said in a text message.

What growth?

According to Mariano, only big businesses are happy over the supposed growth because they are the ones mostly profiting from it.

"What growth are Ms Arroyo's spin doctors talking about?" he said. "*Galunggong* (the poor man's fish) now costs P100 a kilo. The President must try living on a measly P280 minimum wage a day."

Rep. Crispin Beltran, also of Anakpawis, said the majority of Filipinos did not appreciate the growth figures because these did not necessarily translate to improved economic conditions for them.

He said the Arroyo administration had done nothing but burden the working class with taxes.

Beltran also pointed out that the government was relying heavily on the remittances of OFWs when it could not even provide adequate services to them.

He cited the government's supposed weak stand on the changes in Japan's employment policy concerning Filipino entertainers.

Growth for whom?

Bayan's Reyes cited figures from the National Statistics Office (NSO) showing that the daily cost of living had risen from P455.94 in 2003 to P492.19 by the end of 2004.

He said the government itself, through the NSO, had admitted that the purchasing power of the peso had fallen from P0.58 to P0.53 during the same period.

The inflation rate has also gone up from 3.1 percent in 2003 to 7.9 percent in 2004.

"At face value, there may be some growth," Reyes said. "The question is, For whom? Not for the poor, it seems. [The government's] own data say so."

Mayor Ejercito said that even if the economy had indeed done better than expected, the "reality" was that the people were having a hard time coping with soaring prices and utility bills.

Not trickling down

"I don't see [the growth] trickling down. It's not felt by ordinary people," he said, adding:

"If everything is doing well, how come they are raising taxes?" he said. *Reports from Cynthia D. Balana, Norman Bordadora, Luige A. del Puerto and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

Solons want IPPs, lawyers, doctors to pay VAT

From page A1

In an apparent sign that it may be softening somewhat on its stand in favor of a VAT rate increase to 12 percent from 10 percent, Malacañang conceded there was a need to "refine" the proposed tax bill.

But the Palace made it clear that President Macapagal-Arroyo was dead set on a rate increase. Not even an appeal by Catholic Church officials or street protests or a million signatures from those opposed to it would change her mind.

The VAT bill is the most potent of Malacañang's revenue measures, with at least P35 billion in additional revenues expected from it.

Exempted no longer

Tarlac Rep. Jesli Lapus, chair of the House ways and means committee, said the following would be brought into the 12-percent VAT net:

- Independent power producers (IPPs)
- Petroleum products
- Importation of ocean-going vessels, including engine and spare parts of said vessels to be used by the operator himself as operator.
- Medical, dental, hospital and veterinary services
- Legal services

According to Lapus, imposing a VAT on IPPs would yield at least P5 billion for the government while taxing petroleum products would translate into P8 billion in new revenues.

On the other hand, a total of P1.6 billion in VAT was expected to be generated from the professional fees of doctors, another P500 million from lawyers, and P200 million from ocean-going vessels.

Vessels plying inter-island routes were still exempt from VAT.

Correcting distortions

"This is part 2 of the VAT legislations," Lapus said. "It aims to rectify the distortions brought about by exemptions."

Lapus said that sardines, tuna and mackerel, which were not included in the exemptions, all had a presumptive input tax of one percent.

However, these items can still be subject to further increase, he said.

Lapus said the committee recognized the plight of the cooperative sector and this was why it was still exempt from the VAT.

The Lapus committee report will now go to the committee on rules for inclusion in the calendar of business so that it can be scheduled for plenary debate and voting.

In the case of petroleum products, these were also subject to a presumptive input VAT because of the increase in the prices of raw materials used.

Noodles and bread, on the other hand, are still included in the VAT coverage because these do not fall into the category of tuna and mackerel.

First things first

House Minority Leader Francis Escudero said the committee should have completed first the list of lifting of exemptions from VAT before it passed the bill increasing the VAT.

"This is what they should have done in the first place—passed a measure that will seek certain exemptions before even proposing any bill insofar as increasing the VAT by 20 percent or an addition of 2 [percentage points]," Escudero said.

"In our view, the lifting of certain exemptions will not hit the ordinary consumers, unlike the 20-percent increase in VAT, which will definitely hit the poorest of the poor," he stressed.

List of exemptions

Among the transactions still exempted from VAT or increase in VAT were:

- Sale of nonfood agricultural products; marine and forest products in their original state by the primary producer or the owner of the land where the same are produced
- Sale of cotton and cotton seeds in their original state; and copra
- Sale, printing or publication of books and any newspaper, magazine, review or bulletin which appears at regular intervals with fixed prices for subscription and sale, and which is not devoted principally to publication of paid advertisements
- Sale or importation of agricultural and marine food products in their original state, livestock and poultry of a kind generally used as, or yielding or producing foods for human consumption; and breeding stock and genetic materials
- Sale or importation of fertilizers; seed, seedlings and fingerlings; fish, prawn, livestock and poultry feeds, including ingredients, whether locally produced or imported, used in the manufacture of finished feeds for race horses, fighting cocks, aquarium fish, zoo animals and other animals generally considered as pets
- Importation of personal and household effects belonging to the residents of the Philippines returning from abroad and nonresident citizens coming to resettle in the Philippines

Open to compromise

Earlier, at Malacañang, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said that that there was an "emerging consensus" that the tax bill, or at least the House version, had to be further refined "to really cushion the impact of the VAT as far as the low-income classes are concerned."

"We're open to refinements," Bunye stressed.

"The experts have been doing their numbers. They've been analyzing the different figures and the consensus is that some concessions can be given without drastically reducing the intended revenue," Bunye said.

But he said Malacañang was still hoping to raise P80 billion from all tax measures.

While open to amendments, Bunye stressed that Ms Arroyo would not be deterred by protests against the measure.

"The President's position is we need the VAT and it can be refined to address the concerns of our people. In other words, the least of our compatriots will not be severely affected," Bunye said.

Bunye said not even protest rallies at Edsa would stop the government from pursuing VAT.

GMA firm on VAT hike

"This is needed by our country and the President will stand pat on it," Bunye said. "The President is standing up to this because the country needs this."

Asked how Malacañang would react if some influential groups, like the Church, opposed the bill or that a large number of Filipinos staged a rally at Edsa or launch a signature drive to show their dislike for the VAT hike, Bunye said the President would not back out.

"These are all part of the democratic process," said Bunye who dismissed speculation that some groups would use the growing anti-VAT to destabilize the government.

Bunye said other proposals to mitigate the impact of the VAT increase would be welcome.

Consumers' view

A consumer watchdog proposed that power generators be subjected to corporate income taxes instead of lifting the VAT exemption they enjoyed on grounds that that would ultimately result in higher power rates.

Consumer and Oil Price Watch chair Raul Concepcion expressed strong opposition to the imposition of VAT on the power sector, but said he was amenable to the slapping of a 2-percent VAT on the industry, if only as a compromise.

He said a 2-percent VAT imposition should translate into an average P14-a-month increase in the electricity bills of Manila Electric Co. customers.

Mass protest on Feb. 16

The Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, an alliance of militant groups, plans nationwide protests on Feb. 16 against the proposed VAT increase.

"We've been getting positive responses from various regions and provinces who are protesting the new tax measure," Bayan secretary general Renato Reyes said. *With reports from Abigail L. Ho, Norman Bordadora*

No more 'Little Mister and Miss Kuliglig' contests

From page A1

Public schools would no longer be holding beauty contests, talent searches, sports fests, not even parades and other extra-curricular activities during school days.

Education Secretary Florencio Abad put his foot down on what he deemed were unnecessary preoccupations which would take both teachers and students away from the serious business of learning.

Dismal

He partly blamed the frequent class suspensions for the dismal results of the achievement tests of public school students and teachers.

"If it has nothing to do with actual learning, it should be done outside of school hours. So there should be no more searches for 'Little Mister and Miss Kuliglig,'" Abad said.

According to a draft order, which Abad said he would sign soon, classes would no longer be suspended on account of a United Nations Day parade, a Boy Scout or Girl Scout jamboree, Linggo ng Wika program, sports intramurals and the like.

The school should hold these extra-curricular events on weekends or during summer vacation so they would not interfere with classes, he said.

Drastic measures

Abad's draft order, titled "Instituting measures to increase engaged time-on-task and ensuring compliance therewith," would oblige teachers and students to devote all 205 school days to quality teaching and learning.

"The performance of our students is not only disturbing—it is unacceptable," Abad said, explaining why the department had to take such "drastic" measures.

He noted that six hours of classes a day was hardly enough.

"There is not enough time for our students to develop basic competencies in Math, Science and English. We only have 10 years for basic education. We need to maximize the little time we have," he said.

The Department of Education's Special Events Unit has a long list of cultural and historical events that allow the suspension of classes. These are: Independence Day (June 12), Bonifacio Day (Nov. 30), National Heroes' Day (Aug. 29) and Rizal Day (Dec. 30).

On top of the list are other local celebrations such as the Philippine-Spanish Friendship Day for Baler, Quezon; the Leyte landing celebration in Leyte and Tacloban City; various hero's days like Gen. Simeon Ola in Albay and Legaspi City, Gen. Leandro Fullon in Antique, the late President Manuel L. Quezon in Quezon City; and different foundation days for each city.

During UN Day (Oct. 24) and Linggo ng Wika (August), classes are generally suspended to make way for parades and special programs.

Only after school hours

Starting June, according to Abad's order, classes would no longer be suspended "even while there are school celebrations of important historical events or significant occasions" such as UN Day, Arbor Day, School Nutrition Month, Environment Month, AIDS Awareness Day, etc.

The holding of school contests in support of national programs should be conducted outside of school hours, he said.

Even meetings of school clubs, organizations and other student co-curricular activities should be held only after class hours.

Activities that would take one or two days such as Boy Scout and Girl Scout camping and school sports competitions should be conducted on weekends or during the summer, Abad said.

Make up class

School athletes and contestants for academic and non-academic competitions would only be allowed to practice after class hours or during non-school days.

Only schools with official school papers would be allowed to participate in local schools' press conferences.

As for teachers, training programs should only be taken during the summer break or during the five-day, mid-year break so they would not miss classes.

In the case of school celebrations, town and barangay fiestas, local government celebrations like Charter Day, or class suspensions due to typhoons and flooding, Abad would require the schools to hold make up classes.

At the end of the school year, all division superintendents would be required to submit a report on the actual number of school days in every school.

"We will be very strict in requiring make up classes," Abad warned.

DOH CLEARS CONCESSIONAIRE

Booster pumps eyed in Pasay outbreak

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE DEPARTMENT of Health yesterday urged the Pasay City government to investigate establishments with booster pumps in Barangay 123, effectively absolving concessionaire Maynilad Water Services Inc. for the water contamination in the area that downed 39 residents over the weekend.

DOH National Capital Region Director Gerardo Baygugo said Maynilad was already doing repairs on old pipes and had set up water rationing stations in Barangay 123, where 39 residents had been confined as suspected typhoid cases.

Bayugo said the DOH team that went around during the weekend had identified an eatery, Yankee Doodle, which had set up a booster pump that reportedly sucked the water supply from houses in the neighborhood.

Yankee Doodle, the team said, had sold water to the residents who had complained of the foul smell of water in their households. The eatery's water supply, however, was also untreated.

Bayugo said the team could not identify how many other booster pumps were in the area, but said these were responsible for building up a negative pressure in the pipes, and allowing bacteria from human waste to seep in.

"We have given instructions to scrutinize everything inside Yankee Doodle, and to stop establishments or residences from putting up booster pumps," Bayugo told the INQUIRER.

"The DOH, however, said it could not take any action against the eatery or those with booster pumps because these were under the jurisdiction of the local government," he added.

The DOH official said the monthly water sampling done in Metro Manila showed that the water supply in Pasay contained the normal and acceptable residual chlorine level of .2 mg/liter in December.

Bayugo said it would be good to look into the possible sanctions against utility companies and establishments found responsible for contaminating water sources.

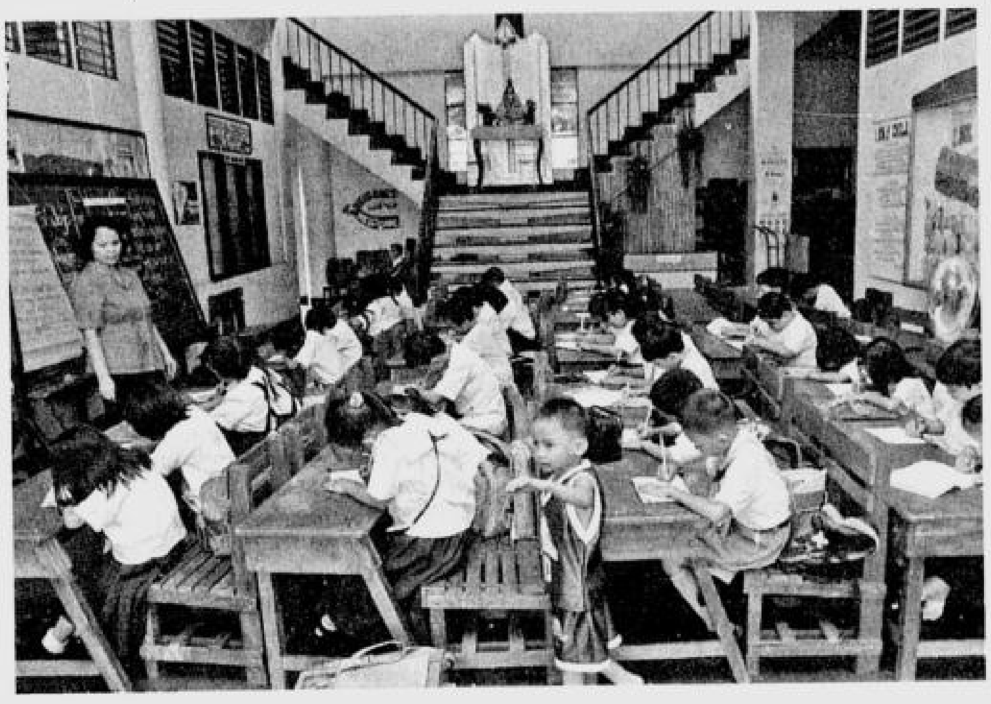
"It would be unfair, however, if we blame Maynilad for the outbreak. It immediately acted when the problem was reported," Bayugo said.

"The system has been there for over 50 years. Maynilad just took over, and it is the one doing repairs now," he said. Maynilad supplies water to Barangay 123 and its neighbors.

Bayugo noted that the probable cases of typhoid had decreased last month, with only four cases in the last week of January, compared with 13 cases in the third week, 14 cases in the second week, and eight cases in the first week.

The DOH and the Pasay City health team visited Barangay 123 again yesterday to check on the health situation of the residents, and to make sure that they did not miss a probable case of typhoid.

The Research Institute for Tropical Medicine is expected to come out with the results of laboratory tests on the rectal swabs of the 39 sick residents today.



ERIK ARAZAS

BACK TO SCHOOL
Pupils of Geronimo Santiago Elementary School affected by a big fire that hit the school hold classes at the lobby of another school building.

Rodriguez folk hit 'quarrying'

By Luige A. del Puerto

BELIEVE me, it is not quarrying, so says the mayor of Rodriguez, Rizal.

Mayor Pedro Cuerpo said yesterday that he was supervising the blasting of rocks in a village in Barangay San Rafael.

This, he said, was part of a clearing operation to develop the area into a jeepney terminal.

A contractor hired by the town to clear the land would be selling the rocks gathered from the site to stone crushers, he said.

"We have hired a contractor to clear the area. As his fee, he would sell the rocks," Cuerpo said.

This is not the first time that quarrying is suspected at the site in Sitio A.C. covering less than a hectare.

Cuerpo said someone used to gather rocks in the area and former officials reportedly tried to hide it by calling the act a "road widening project." He has since stopped the practice, Cuerpo said.

The mayor said he was not doing the same.

"I don't think we will be accused of quarrying. People have some doubts because there used to be quarrying here, and they just called it a road widening project," he said.

"This is simply an infrastructure project," he said. "It's not quarrying."

Controlled blasting

Cuerpo said he needed to clear some space using "controlled blasting" because the area is a mess.

Some residents are accusing the municipal government of quarrying or of allowing private individuals to quarry in the site when nobody has a permit to do so.

A member of one of 20 families living near the blasting site, called dzBB radio yesterday to complain about the activity.

"They are about to blast the rocks already," the caller, a woman, said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Cuerpo said the town had an environmental compliance certificate to build the terminal and a blasting permit from the police.

But why build a terminal in an area already tainted with accusations of being a quarry site? Also, why build a terminal at all?

The mayor said the town has no other space in the area, save this site, for the terminal.

"There are many jeepneys in the area, and they just park by the roadside. We need to build a terminal," he said. "It is also a livelihood program. People can (later) sell their produce here."

Rodriguez is no stranger to quarrying operations. It supplies much of the rock requirements of construction firms in Metro Manila.

Trash scheme to include homes

By Tarra V. Quismundo

THE MANILA Department of Public Services (DPS) has expanded its "no segregation, no collection of garbage" policy from food chains and shopping complexes to households in the city.

Starting with the sixth district, the DPS would be requiring residents to turn in their waste already segregated from other trash that could be recycled for sale to junk shops.

"We are now on a massive information campaign on garbage segregation all over Manila, but we decided to begin with District Six because that's the place we feel is least burdensome in terms of garbage collection," said DPS chief Rafael Borromeo.

"It was a unanimous decision to start with District Six on March 1 because residents there had been receptive to our programs. And, of course, because Malacañang is there, we have to show that we could make the nation's seat of power follow the policy first," said DPS operations head Annie Farrales.

An expansion of the city's implementation of Republic Act 9003 or the Ecological Waste Management Act of 2001, the program has been in place in some 100 free-standing food chains, and would be implemented in shopping malls this month.

Farrales said the DPS would also target the other districts, but only after District 6 registered a hundred percent compliance.

The DPS projected that the "no segregation, no collection" policy would reduce the expected garbage collection in District 6 by at least 27.5 percent.

METROBRIEFS

Osang to be arrested

THE MAKATI City Regional Trial Court yesterday issued a warrant for the arrest of actress Rosanna Roces. Judge Ricardo Rosario ordered the police to arrest Roces, whose real name is Jennifer Molina, after she failed to attend yesterday's hearing on the libel case filed against her by beauty surgeon Vicki Belo. The lawyers of Roces likewise did not attend the hearing despite notice, according to Branch Clerk of Court Atty. Marjorie de Castro. The INQUIRER tried to reach Roces but she could not be contacted through her cellular phone. Roces is currently out on bail for the two counts of libel filed by Belo in May. *Jocelyn Valle*

LAS PIÑAS FISH PORT
LAS PIÑAS is hoping to become the new fish trading center of southern Metro Manila after it opened its own fish port recently. The fish port is a pet project of Sen. Manny Villar and Rep. Cynthia Villar

No law, but statutes cited vs cybersex dens

By Leila B. Salaverria

IN THE ABSENCE of specific laws targeting cybersex operations, the Manila police would be using the statutes against grave scandal and exhibition of offensive or immoral material to prosecute operators of dens offering sexual services via the Internet.

The move was in response to a directive of President Macapagal-Arroyo to crack down on cybersex dens, said Western Police District director Chief Supt. Pedro Bulaong.

"Cybersex is a species of pornography and a crime against morals under the Revised Penal Code," Bulaong said in a statement.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez yesterday also urged his former colleagues in Congress to pass a law that specifically penalizes operators of cybersex dens.

Gonzalez warned that these dens would continue to proliferate if no specific law was passed against it.

"A law should be passed to cover this offense. Even the Revised Penal Code is quiet about it. These are like opium dens," Gonzalez said.

Bulaong said Article 200, which penalizes grave scandal, and Article 201, which penalizes the exhibition of shows or works that are contrary to law, public order, morals and good customs, can be used against operators of Internet shops that offer a special form of prostitution.

The penalty for violation of Article 200 is one to 30 days imprisonment or public censure. Violators of Article 201 would face a jail sentence of six months and one day to six years, or fined (from P6,000 to P12,000, or both).

The special form of prostitution is conducted via the Internet and the use of webcams, by inviting people in other countries to watch Filipino women perform sexual acts in exchange for a fee paid via credit cards. The lucrative operation has lured many young, and sometimes underage, girls to the trade.

Bulaong said Manila policemen have begun monitoring computer shops which could be providing cubicles where cybersex is performed. Shops caught engaging in such activities face closure by the city government.

Gonzalez also agreed with the police that the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 was not enough to prosecute and penalize operators of cybersex dens.

He added that while some cities might have ordinances against them, a law was still needed for a nationwide crackdown against cybersex dens.

With Philip C. Tubeza

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WARNING TO DRIVERS

MMDA to resume seizing licenses because of TRO

By Margaux C. Ortiz

DRIVERS, be ready to part with your licenses and spend long hours redeeming them once a temporary restraining order (TRO) on the Metropolitan Traffic Ticket (MTT) scheme is enforced.

That was the warning of Metro Manila traffic director Angelito Vergel de Dios as he disclosed that they were preparing to go back to the old system of issuing traffic violation receipts (TVRs).

"We have no choice but to bring back the old scheme despite the inconvenience it would cause drivers," Vergel de Dios said.

He added that they still had 860 TVR booklets to issue to erring motorists.

He said the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) would be printing 1,200 more booklets to cover the 20-day duration of the TRO.

"The old scheme entails the confiscation of violators' licenses," Vergel de Dios said, adding that motorists have to line up at a designated redemption center to redeem their licenses.

Payment in banks

With the MTT, traffic violators needed only to pay the fine at any Metrobank branch in the country.

"The old scheme would require thousands of road violators to line up at our temporary redemption center in Orense (Makati)," the Metro traffic director said.

Last week, Judge Cesar Santamaria of the Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 145 issued a 20-day TRO on three MMDA traffic schemes including the MTT, No Contact Traffic Apprehension (NCTA) and Organized Bus Route (OBR).

The order was in response to a petition by nine transport groups which claimed that the implementation of the schemes trampled on "their constitutional right to due process which necessarily includes their right to life."

Meanwhile, the MMDA is set to ask the Makati RTC to increase to P20 million the P100,000 bond it is asking transport groups to cover damages the agency may incur because of the TRO.

"The original bond amount is too small," MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando said Monday, adding that the agency earned P500,000 a day for the MTT scheme alone.

Robbers kill clerk during cell phone rob

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

WHEN she refused to give her cellular phone, robbers shot her in the head, right in front of her house, a few meters from a church in Quezon City the Monday night.

Ivy Diwa, 24, underwent surgery at the Quirino Memorial Medical Center but died at about 2 p.m. yesterday, Rev. Fr. Robert Reyes told the INQUIRER.

Because of the killing, fear has swept the community, said Reyes, parish priest of Miraculous Medal Church in Project 4, Quezon City.

"Our people are now afraid of walking in the dark," Reyes said.

A report from the Central Police District said Diwa, a clerk at an ink refilling station, was walking on her way home on Legaspi Street in Barangay Marilag at 11:50 p.m. when the incident took place.

According to witnesses, two men on board a motorcycle, with one armed with a handgun, tried to grab her Nokia 3210 cell phone.

She resisted and tried to run to their house, Reyes said, quoting witnesses.

But the robbers opened fire, hitting Diwa in the head.

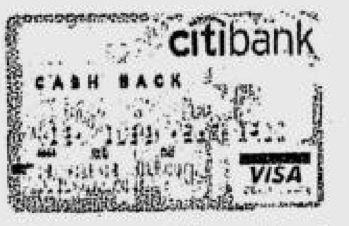
The victim fell to the ground right in front of their house. The robbers quickly drove away.

Reyes said this was not the first time a parishioner fell prey to street robbers.

Residents had pointed to robbers on a motorcycle as behind the series of cell phone robberies in Project 4, he said.

Speaking for the neighborhood, Reyes asked the police and the barangay not only to solve the case but to prevent other crimes like this.

Diwa was the first victim killed in the series of robberies.



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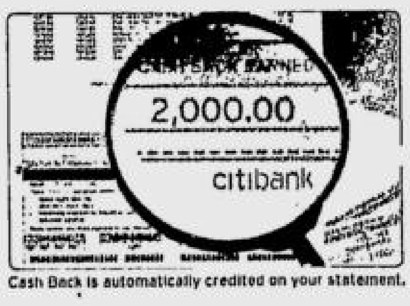

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BASKETBALL: US NCAA—Illinois vs Michigan State; 8 a.m. (r-9:30 p.m.); Syracuse vs Pittsburgh; 10 a.m.; North Carolina vs Virginia; 3:30 p.m. (r); ESPN—Get your fill of college hoops with a blockbuster triple-header.

NBA—Suns vs Grizzlies; 9 a.m. (r-7 p.m.); Sports Plus; Sonics vs Kings; 11 a.m. (r-9 p.m.); Sports Plus—Phoenix takes on Memphis while Seattle battles Sacramento.

Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

Pals eye No.2; forfeiture dangles

By June Navarro

TALK 'N TEXT shoots for a second straight win over Barangay Ginebra in today's Gran Matador PBA Philippine Cup Finals at the Araneta Coliseum with the portent of a Game 1 forfeiture dangling over its head.

The Phone Pals ran the risk of putting their 89-71 victory in the opener of the best-of-seven championship series to waste after fielding in Asi Taulava, who, despite a court order allowing him to play, has been rendered ineligible by the league.

GAME TODAY
(*Araneta Coliseum*)
(Game 2 of best-of-seven Finals)
7:10 p.m.—Talk 'N Text vs Barangay Ginebra
Game 1-Talk N Text d. Barangay Ginebra, 89-71

PBA Commissioner Noli Eala is set to decide on the valid outcome of Game 1 late last night after the Gin Kings lodged a protest and the Phone Pals asked to substantiate their unpopular move of fielding Taulava.

"As an ineligible player (Taulava), various violations are already committed by the franchise (Talk 'N Text) when it made him play," said Eala, hinting that either a forfeiture or replay of Game 1 will be his decision.

Even so, the Phone Pals remain adamant on their stand as they again defy league rules and invoke the decision of the Quezon City court by letting Taulava play in Game 2.

"You'll definitely see more of Asi," said Talk 'N Text coach Joel Banal. "It's their (Gin Kings) right to do that (file protest). But it's also our right to make Asi play. We will do everything we can for him because he's part of the team." Jimmy Alapag and Willie Miller, who frolicked on Ginebra's token defense in Game 1, are expected to again combine their wares with Vic Pablo, Mark Telan, Yancy De Ocampo and Taulava.

"Asi inspires the team. His presence is more psychological than physical or technical in terms of motivation," said Banal. "About the case, we can't do anything about it. Our focus is on the game."

After a two-day rest, the Gin Kings have probably regained their health and made adjustments on their shortcomings in Game 1.

"We're going to come out stronger, better," said Barangay Ginebra coach Siot Tanquingcen. "We'll be a hundred percent and see where the chips fall."

BARANGAY GINEBRA
KINGS
PHONE PALS
88

TAULAVA (right) and Andy Seigle jockey for position in Game One.
REM ZAMORA

No violation on fielding of Taulava—TNT

TALK 'N TEXT maintained yesterday that it has not committed any violation that would justify any sanction or penalty from the Philippine Basketball Association (PBA) concerning the TNT Phone Pals' fielding of Paul Asi Taulava in Game 1 of the PBA Philippine Cup finals.

The Pals scored an emphatic 89-71 win over Barangay Ginebra in the opener of the best-of-seven series.

In its formal reply to the protest filed by Ginebra last Jan. 31, Talk 'N Text, through its PBA board representative Victorio "Ricky" Vargas, yesterday cited the reasons why the PBA cannot give due course to the protest.

While rebutting point by point Ginebra's contentions, Vargas stressed in his letter to PBA Commissioner Noli Eala that the league would be violating the Jan. 26 order of the Quezon City Regional Trial Court if the PBA would penalize TNT for complying with the court's order to allow Taulava to resume playing in the PBA.

"To give due course to the protest would constitute a circumvention of the writ of preliminary mandatory injunction as it would allow an indirect defiance of the court order in the guise of resolving a protest and imposing arbitrary sanctions and penalties," Vargas wrote Eala.

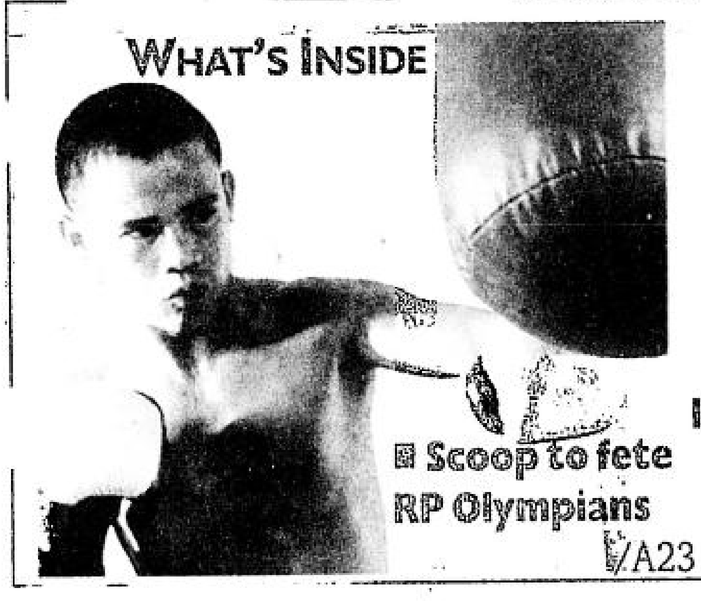
Vargas refuted Ginebra's claims that TNT failed to include Taulava in its roster in time for the league's Jan. 14 deadline for changes to be made in the lineups; that Taulava remains suspended and should not have played in Game 1, and that Taulava has not complied with the PBA's process of reinstatement.

Vargas pointed out the following:

- That Talk 'N Text team manager Frankie Lim submitted to the PBA their lineup last Jan. 12 along with a letter (Annex A of Talk 'N Text's reply to the protest) stating that the team left a space for its 12th member reserved for Taulava. The letter made clear the Phone Pals' intention to include Taulava in the roster except that he was still suspended then (Jan. 12).
- On Jan. 28, 2005, Lim sent another letter (Annex B) to inform Eala that by virtue of a court order dated Jan. 26, 2005, Taulava was named as the 12th member of the TNT team pursuant to the first letter of Jan. 12, 2005. Accordingly, Talk 'N Text did not change the team lineup beyond the prescribed period because Asi Taulava was named as the 12th member as of Jan. 12, 2005.

As to the allegation that Taulava remains suspended and should not have played in Game 1, Vargas said that "pursuant to the court order dated Jan. 26, 2005, Taulava shall be allowed 'to resume the exercise of his contractual rights including his right to play in the All Filipino Conference and succeeding conferences of the PBA during the term of the Uniform Players' Contract dated June 19, 2001 . . .'"

WHAT'S INSIDE



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Pinoy bets to train in China for SEAG

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE PHILIPPINES will be sending athletes coming from 10 pre-selected sports to train in China even as Chinese coaches are set to fly in to help in the country's preparation for the Southeast Asian Games this year.

Athletes from swimming, track and field, archery, gymnastics, shooting, table tennis, badminton, wushu, weightlifting and volleyball will be sent to different parts of mainland China for rigid training this year.

Philippine Sports Commission officer-in-charge Butch Ramirez yesterday said the country renewed its partnership with China during his visit there over the weekend with First Gentleman Mike Arroyo and former PSC chief Butch Tuason.

The partnership, which centers on training of the athletes and the arrival of the foreign coaches, will be re-launched on Feb. 15 at the Philsports in Pasig.

RAMIREZ

The program's target is for the Philippines to cop the overall title in the Nov. 27-Dec. 5 SEA Games.

The national athletes taking part in the program will join Mr. Arroyo at the Ninoy Aquino Stadium on Feb. 8 in a ceremony to formalize their commitment to winning the gold medal in the SEA Games.

The First Gentleman led a pledging session with business leaders last month, raising P150 million intended for the athletes' training.

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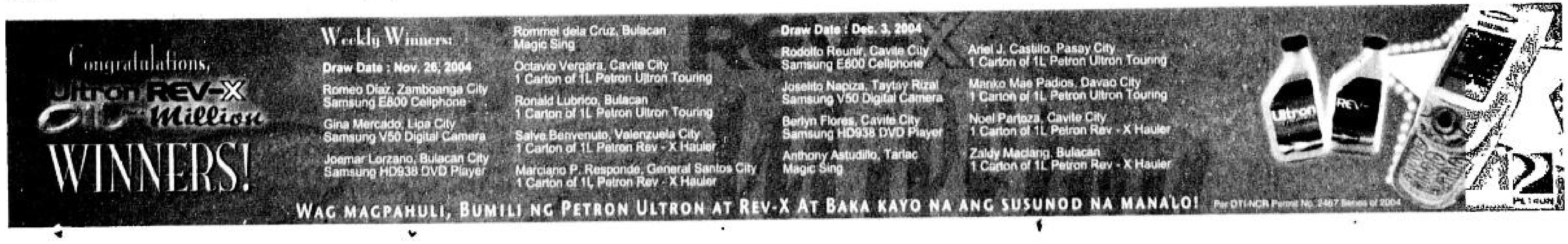

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Paintmasters rally to beat Jewels

ANTHONY Washington (5) braces for a shot over a fallen Montaña defender. RYAN LIM

GAMES TOMORROW (*Makati Coliseum*)
3:30 p.m.—Montaña vs Welcoat
(*Game 2 of best-of-five finals*)

By Jasmine W. Payo

THE WELCOAT bench could hardly watch in the first half. And it took some reprimanding from coach Caloy Garcia before the Paintmasters staged a feisty comeback for a 73-65 win over the Montaña Pawnshop in Game 1 of the PBL Open Championship finals yesterday at the Makati Coliseum.

"It was a very tough game," said Garcia after the Paintmasters posted their first win over the Jewels this conference. "We played so badly in the first half and I thought it couldn't get any worse. We weren't playing our game so I told them to be patient in our offense."

Anthony Washington, who was hardly a factor in the first two quarters, posted another double-double performance with 18 points and 16 rebounds.

"At least our morale is high now," said Garcia. "This is the first time we won three straight games. And we also showed that we can beat them with [Alex] Compton."

Earlier, Magnolia-FEU salvaged its campaign after beating Granny Goose, 60-52, for a second runner-up finish.

Arwind Santos scored 13 points for the Wizards, whose bid for a second straight title was foiled by Welcoat in the semifinals.

After trailing by as many as 14-26 in the first half, Chester Tolomia restored order as he scored 9 of his 15 points during Welcoat's pivotal third-quarter rally.

Welcoat stared at a 28-37 deficit at halftime, but Tolomia teamed up with Marvin Ortiguerra to pull Welcoat within a point, 39-40. A Tolomia triple swung the lead to Welcoat for the first time since the first period, 42-41.

Compton later shot three charities to put the Jewels back in control, 46-44. But the Jewels suddenly lost their offensive touch as they went silent in the last four minutes of the third quarter.

And while Welcoat's advantage kept growing behind Washington and Ryan Dy, the Jewels misfired their last eight attempts for a 58-46 tally by the end of the period.

The Jewels continued to miss wide open shots and easy putbacks in the final quarter, and the Paintmasters easily padded their lead to 19 points, 65-46.

A Paul Guerrero triple at the 6:43 mark finally put the Jewels back at the scoring board, 65-49.

The Jewels' freethrows weren't any better as they shot only nine of their 17 gift shots in the final quarter.

Compton tried to lead the Jewels in a brief rally to close within seven points, 70-63, but the Jewels missed their last four shots in the final minute.

The Paintmasters also outrebounded the Jewels, 56-38.

The Jewels opened the first quarter at a frenetic tempo that seemingly rattled the Paintmasters, giving them an early double-digit lead, 15-4.

The scores:

First game

MAGNOLIA-FEU 60—Santos 13, Catli 11, Rañeses 10, Miranda 9, Ybañez 6, Rizada 4, Jones 3, Isip 2, Co 2, Misolas 0, Yabut 0, Chan 0.

GRANNY GOOSE 52—Almeda 10, Santos 8, Quiñahan 6, Grijaldo 6, Cruz 5, Ibañes 5, Larong 4, Concha 3, David 3, Capati 2, Latonio 0, Cervantes 0.

Quarters: 14-18, 25-26, 43-40, 60-52.

Second game

WELCOAT 73—Washington 18, Tolomia 15, Dy 14, Reyes 7, Sta. Maria 7, Ortiguerra 5, Tan 3, Gamboa 2, Coching 2, Najorda 0.

MONTAÑA 65—Compton 20, Magpayo 13, Capus 10, Salvador 7, Dela Cuesta 6, Guerrero 4, Baguion 2, Vergara 2, Juntilla 1, Mercado 0, Espiritu 0.

Quarters: 9-21, 28-37, 58-46, 73-65.

SPORTSWATCH

Bautista to fight Thai in Hawaii

IT'S GO for Rey "Boom Boom" Bautista's scheduled trip to the United States. The promising 18-year-old boxer from Bohol who's trying to follow the footsteps of Manny Pacquiao yesterday secured his US visa, paving the way for his scheduled bout against a Thai opponent in Hawaii on March 11. Bautista, who defeated South African Vyusili Bebe in a 12-round decision last Saturday at the Mandaue Cultural and Sports Complex, will face Aree Phosuwonggym in a non-title main event at the Blaisdell Arena in Honolulu. It will serve as Bautista's launching pad in the US where his handler, Tony Aldeguer, and trainer, Ala Villamar, hope to see more of him. Bautista is the reigning world boxing organization Asia-Pacific bantamweight (118 lb) champion. A victory in Hawaii could line him up for bigger fights abroad where he is no simon-pure. "I've fought in Japan, Korea and Indonesia, but this is my first time to fight in the US," Bautista said in Filipino during yesterday's PSA forum.

Dimakiling-Ingcad Dalawahan champs

THE PAIR of Fide Master Oliver Dimakiling and Mark Oliver Ingcad swept their seventh and final matches against the tandem of National Master Efren Bagamasbad and Mario Jimenez, 2-0, Sunday to rule via tiebreak the first edition of MCC Dalawahan standard chess tournament at the J & F Divino Building along Aurora Boulevard in Quezon City. The Dimakiling-Ingcad duo actually tied for 1st-2nd places with the NM John Paul Gomez-Aries Hernandez team of DLSU with 5.5 points each. However, Dimakiling-Ingcad emerged champion due to better tiebreak. *Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*

Camp John Hay hosting Corporate Cup

BAGUIO is all geared up in hosting the 17th Corporate Cup at the Camp John Hay Golf Course. Over 40 teams of four players each are expected to take part in this event where major corporations' CEO's and high-ranking executives socialize and network. An entry fee of P20,000 for a team of four players entitles them to a practice round, two tournament rounds, opening-night cocktails, bonfire barbecue dinner party and awards dinner. Over and above all these, Camp John Hay Manor will provide two rooms at the hotel for three nights to accommodate the team. Entertainment, raffle, giveaways and trophies are included, too. Tournament chair Freddie Mendoza with Bong Vitchez, GM of John Hay Club, and Jeric Hechanova, the corporate golf director, are behind this event. Deadline for submission of entry forms is Feb. 25 with full payment. Forms may be requested from Rakel at 6376966.

Lower ticket prices for derby elims

ANOTHER full-house crowd is expected today at Roligon Mega Cockpit for phase 3 of the 4-stage 3-cock preliminaries, after ticket prices were lowered to P200 and P300 for general admission and ringside seats, respectively. Only Charlie's Angels entry of Charlie Espiritu and Jeric March 14 May 4-Cock Derby of Jeric Junio were able to score three perfect points during last Monday's Day-2 of eliminations, to join the 11 undefeated bets from last Saturday's opener. The event, hosted by Rolly Ligon and sponsored by Thunderbird Power Feeds, stakes a guaranteed cash prize of P4 million and a 3-door 2800 Pajero.

Candelaria 7-cocker championship

SONNY Lagon of Blue Blade Farm and former Passi City Mayor Jezry Palmares, who both swept their elimination-round assignments, lead more than 70 finalists today when the championship of the 180-entry 38th Annual Candelaria 7-Cock Derby unfolds at the Iloilo Coliseum. Lagon's Blue Blade San Pablo entry fields Sweater-Kelso battlecocks, while Palmares' JP Wild Bird Agusan unleashes brothers to his birds that scored 12 wins, a draw and a loss during the 2003 Hatawan 7-Cocker at Roligon with Pangasinan's pride, Manuel Lui. Staking more than P7 million in total prize purse, the 5-day event is hosted by Chito Tinsay.

RACING TIPS
AT SANTA ANA
BY MR. 999

Race 1—1. Blitzkrieg 2. Golden Treasure 3. Skip Away
Race 2—1. Wind Storm 2. Sa Wakas 3. Mercury Rising 4. Daddy's Girl
Race 3—1. Dynasty 2. My Lucky One 3. Shuttler 4. Honoree/Pirouette 5. Mercurian
Race 4—1. Euro Bucks 2. Speed Advantage 3. Spinning Bullet 4. Yokozuna
Race 5—1. Nagmamahal 2. Full of Success 3. El Cid 4. Never Enough 5. Saving Grace
Race 6—1. Gleaming Heart 2. Noble House 3. Wild Orphan 4.Angel Eyes
Race 7—1. Batang Cabu 2. Sham Sham 3. Serendipity 4. Great Year 5. Last Dance
Race 8—1. Victoria's Secret 2. Apex 3. Speed Admiral 4. The Magician 5. Unrivalled 6. My Rabbonnie

88 teams join Global Destiny caging

THE NATIONAL Youth Commission and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency have thrown their full support to the First Global Destiny Basketball League opening on Saturday at the Marikina Sports Complex in Marikina City.

"Both the NYC and the PDEA recognize the significance of this youth-oriented project aimed at channeling our young people to a wholesome sports activity and away from the bad influence of illegal drugs," Jet Gaerlan, Destiny Cable assistant vice president for special events and GBDL tournament director, said at the PSA forum yesterday.

"This is why PDEA director Anselmo Avenido and NYC executive director Dino Badilla have given their endorsement to the First Global Destiny Basketball League," added Gaerlan of the cable giant's first foray into grassroots basketball development.

Appearing with Gaerlan in the session sponsored by Agfa, Red Bull and Pagcor were Global Destiny senior vice president Butch Bautista and multititled San Beda Red Cubs mentor Edmundo "Ato" Badolato, who was tapped as the event's consultant.

"Organizing 88 teams from 11 cities with close to 1,200 players is no joke," said Badolato. "Expect some exciting basketball in the next 10 months."

The teams in the event for boys aged 16 years old and under will come from Quezon City, Manila, San Juan, Valenzuela, Marikina, Mandaluyong, Makati, Pasay, Las Piñas, Parañaque and Muntinlupa.

Matches will be staged once on weekends during the intra-city phase of the tournament then twice on weekends when it moves up to the inter-city stage. The event will last for 10 months.

Bautista, speaking on behalf of Global Destiny's Philip Chien, said organizing the cagefest is part of Global Destiny's social and civic commitment to the community, adding that cash prizes are also up for grabs.

"The champion of the First Global Destiny Basketball League will get P200,000, the losing finalist P150,000 and the third placer P50,000," Bautista said.

The tournament's opening ceremonies will start at 4 p.m. and will usher in the competition on Saturday at the Marikina Sports Complex.

Cardona: Proven winner

CARDONA (17): Winning comes with a heavy price. PDI PHOTO

NO DOUBT about it, Mac Cardona of ICTSI-La Salle is a winner.

But winning, says the King Archer, comes with a heavy price.

"I spend most of my time on the basketball court," said Cardona. "I need to stay in shape all the time because the competition is getting stronger and stronger. There's always room for improvement."

Known for his pesky defense and explosive game, Cardona actually led the MVP race in the ongoing PBL Open Championship.

But ICTSI, which fielded the same team defending its UAAP title this year, failed to make the finals.

Cardona, however, isn't going to lose sleep by not winning the MVP title.

He has already proven his point.

"By leading the MVP race, I prove that I can compete with the best," Cardona said.

Cardona, who has already won numerous awards donning the Archers jersey, promised to come out stronger, faster and more intense as he pursues his dream to shine in the PBA next year.

Aside from his regular dose of 'backbreaking' practices, Cardona is also powered by vitamins and mineral supplements from the General Nutrition Center (GNC) which is known for its total fitness program.

Like Cardona, Nic Belasco of San Miguel Beer and Coca-Cola's Ali Peek also endorse GNC products.

"The brilliant thing about GNC products isn't about just taking vitamins and mineral supplements. Cardona said he's taking protein, mega whey, mega men, creatine, Vit. C 2000 and muscle recovery pills for maximum performance.

"GNC products make these possible," Cardona said.

All-Pinoy for badminton team—Ramos

By Marc Anthony Reyes

"EVEN if we never get a medal, we will stick with our Filipino players."

With that strong statement, Philippine Badminton Association president Ming Ramos yesterday dispelled speculations that Indonesian players will beef up the country's campaign in the 2005 Southeast Asian Games here.

The former First Lady belied reports that Puri Setyo and Rudy Widjaya will be entered as Filipino bets in the SEAG on Nov. 27 to Dec. 5 as well as the claims that they represented the country in last year's US Open.

"On the issue of the Indonesia players, they did not represent the Philippines. They probably stated Philippines as country of origin because they [flew to the US] from here," said Ramos in a prepared statement.

Setyo and Widjaya took part in the US Open with seven other Filipinos but Ramos said she didn't authorize them to don the national colors.

She added that only seven delegates from the Philippines were sanctioned, namely Valentin "Butch" Oreta as playing coach, Ian Piencenaves, Arolas Amahit, Lloyd Escoses, Christopher Flores, Ricky Bartolome and Mark Alvin Trinidad.

The Indonesians have been in the country training with some members of the national team for the past two years, according to Oreta, who fully supported their inclusion in the RP squad.

Ramos also belied Oreta's claim that the PBA board meddled with his training program and caused his resignation last Nov. 15.

She even quoted Oreta's resignation letter as saying: "I must spend more time now with my family, especially with my wife who has a tumor in the pituitary gland."

Contrary to Oreta's allegations, Ramos said they have given the erstwhile national mentor "all the possible help, including assistant coaches of his choice, but unfortunately, the coaches asked to be relieved due to policy differences."

Ramos maintained that the national team is still intact and that a tryout will be conducted to finalize the composition of the team that will compete in the SEA Games.

V-League semifinals begin tomorrow

GAMES TOMORROW (*Rizal Memorial Coliseum*)
(*Semifinal round/best-of-three*)
3 p.m.—La Salle vs Letran
5 p.m.—UST vs PSC

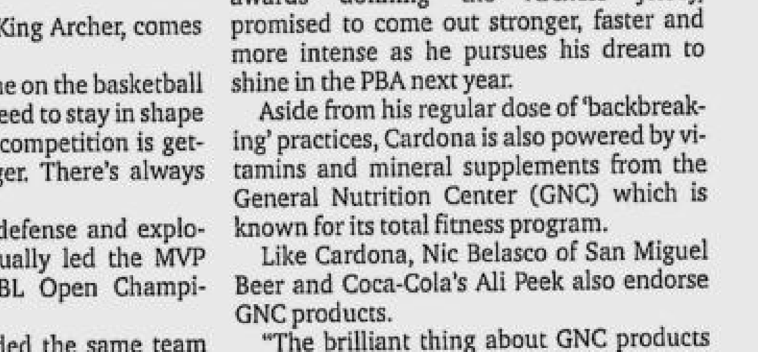
WELL-SERVED.

That's what women's volleyball has become the last few months, thanks to Shakey's V-League, which turned the once dormant game into a lively sport that had the crowd clamoring for more.

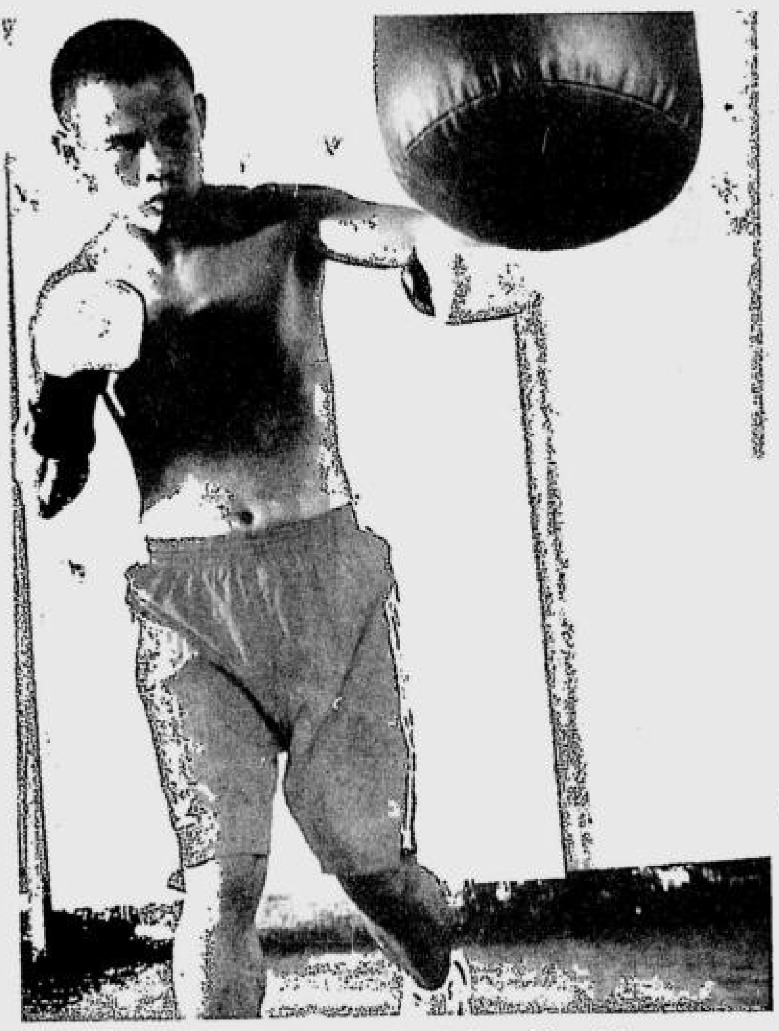
And more is what's in store for the fans beginning tomorrow when the Shakey's V-League second conference stages its semifinal round featuring the country's top two collegiate teams, a talented guest squad and a team peaking at the right time.

La Salle, the elims topnotcher, takes on darkhorse Letran, which beat Lyceum for the fourth and last semis berth, in the first game at 3 p.m. at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum. UST, winner of the inaugural staging of the event last year, collides with Philippine Sports Commission, a team backstopped by members of the 1993 SEA Games champion squad.

The organizing Sports Vision Management Group Inc expects the crowd to come in droves based on the fans' response heading into the final phase of the double-round eliminations.



SPORTS Vision Management Group Inc. president Emilio 'Jun' Bernardino (right) stresses a point during the re-launching of the Shakey's V-League women's volleyball tournament on primetime on IBC-13 at the PSA Forum. With him are Vic Gregorio (left), Shakey's GM, and Philip Ella Juico, CEO of IBC-13.



VELASCO came close to bagging the elusive gold medal for the Philippines in the 1996 Atlanta Olympics.

Scoop to fete RP Olympians, sports greats

FILIPINO Olympians who carried the country's colors in the quadrennial event from 1924 to 2004 will be honored during the SCOOP (Sports Communicators Organization of the Philippines) Annual Awards Night.

All surviving Olympians, according to SCOOP president Eddie Alinea of Tempo, will be invited in the event to be held in coordination with the Philippine Olympians Association, headed by Art Macapagal, its president, and chair Rafael Hechanova.

Heading the list of invitees in the affair tentatively set Feb. 24 are boxers Anthony "Boy" Villanueva and Mansueto "Onyok" Velasco, the only silver medalists so far; and Leopoldo Serrantes and Roel Velasco, both bronze medalists.

Also expected to grace the occasion are Arianne Cerdana, gold medalist in exhibition sport bowling, and Stephen Fernandez and Bea Lucero, bronze medalists in demonstration event taekwondo.

They, along with deceased swimmer Teofilo Ildefonso, high jumper Simeon Toribio and pugilist Jose "Cely" Villanueva, father of Anthony, will be conferred with "Lifetime Achievement Award" for their heroics that did the country proud.

SCOOP is calling the relatives of Ildefonso, back-to-back bronze medalist in the 1928 and 1932 Olympics, Toribio and Villanueva to represent them in the celebration.

Plans, according to Macapagal, is to bestow all the surviving Olympians special awards.

Among those to be invited are basketball great Gabriel Fajardo, high jumper Andres Franco and shooter Enrique Beech, who saw action in the 1948, 1952 and 1956 Games, respectively.

Other invitees are sports legends like Carlos the "Big Difference" Loyzaga, former Sen. Robert Jaworski and four-time PBA MVP Ramon Fernandez in basketball; former Asian sprint queen Lydia de Vega-Mercado; Southeast Asian Games standouts Eric Buhain and Akiko Thomson in swimming; Rodrigo del Rosario and nephew Salvador del Rosario, a former world weightlifting champion;

Former world speed shooting champion Jethro Dionisio; two-time Tour Luzon champion Cornelio Padilla Jr.; and Jasmin Figueroa in archery and Mary Antoinette Rivero in taekwondo.

Olympians can call Chris Magboo of Macapagal's Toyota office at 813-2051 and Etheljune Malanum of SCOOP at 522-0456 or 521-2692.

Taekwondo tilt unfolds Sunday

THE COUNTRY'S leading taekwondo jins will see action as the Petron CPJ Taekwondo Championship unfolds on Sunday to determine the members of the Philippine team for this year.

According to Philippine Taekwondo Association president Robert N. Aventajado, winners of the competition will undergo rigorous training for participation in the world championships, Korea Open championships, World Hwarang Festival and the 23rd Southeast Asian Games to be held in the Philippines this year.

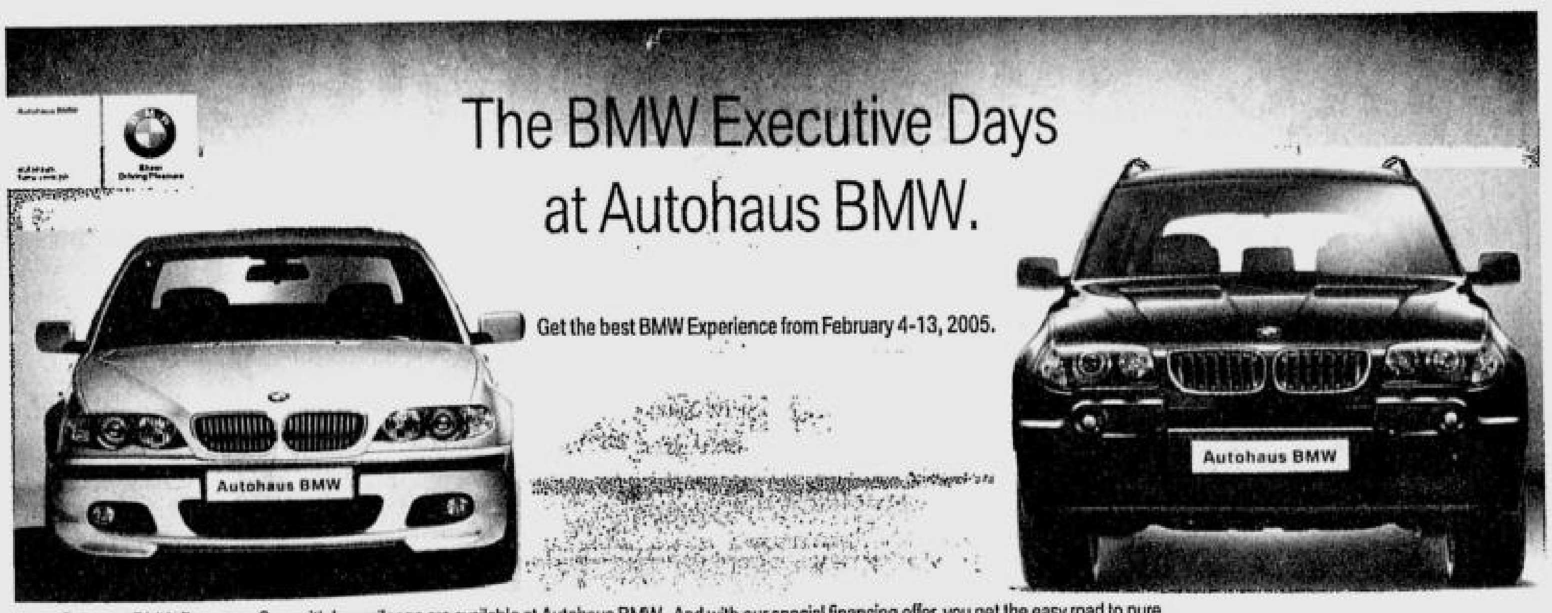
PTA organizing committee chair Sung Chon Hong said those vying for national team berths will be matched in accordance to weight.

Olympians Donald David Geisler, Tshomlee Go and Mary Antoinette Rivero will compete with other jins from affiliated schools and chapters nationwide, including the Armed Forces of the Philippines branches.

Competition will be conducted in advance categories in eight divisions—seniors (men and women), juniors (men and women) mid-juniors (men and women) and grade school (boys and girls).

The event supported by the Philippine Sports Commission, Petron, Milo and Accel will give the jins the chance to display effective techniques and styles.

Martial arts enthusiasts and sports fans are invited to watch the tournament starting at 9 a.m.



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BMW 316i Ed. 2004 Sienna Red 2,000km, P1,685,000	**BMW 318i M Sport** 2004 Titanium Silver 4,000km, P2,500,000	**BMW 325i Exec.** 2004 Titanium Silver 11,000km, P2,600,000	**BMW X3 2.5i Exec.** 2004 Blue Water 2,000km, P3,750,000	**BMW X3 3.0i Exec.** 2004 Mystic Blue 4,000km, P3,950,000

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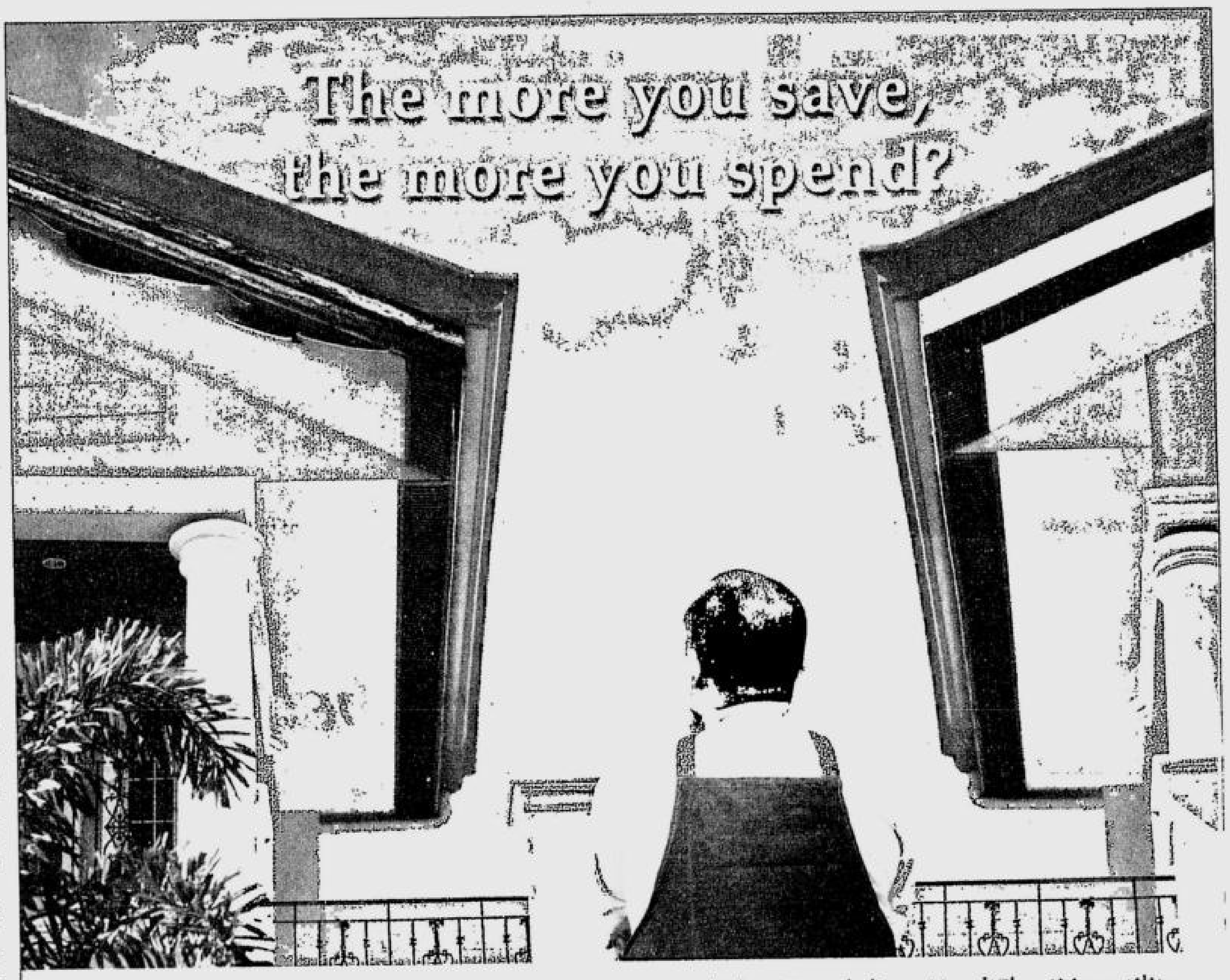
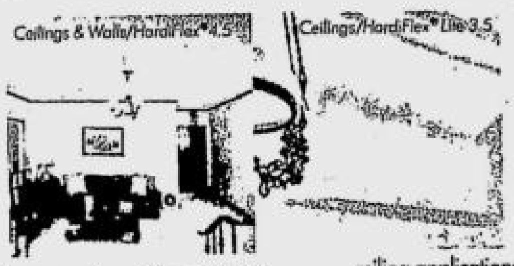


More Savings, More Problems?

When it comes to home, sweet home, cheaper-is-better does not apply. The more you scrimp and save on parts, the more headaches you will most likely encounter. In the end, you spend more.



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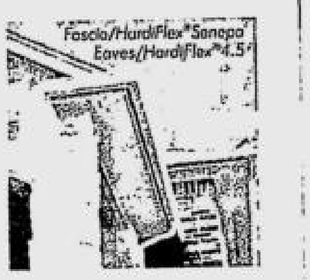

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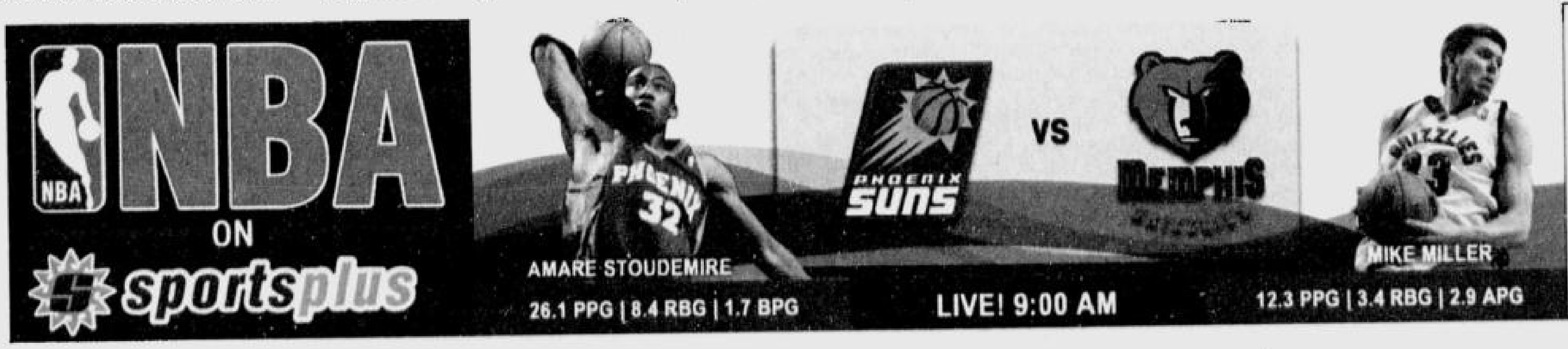

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Sixers tweak Pacers

Ginobili stars as Spurs rout Sonics

PHILADELPHIA—Kyle Korver made a go-ahead jumper with 6.5 seconds left, and Allen Iverson returned from a three-game absence to score 27 points in the Philadelphia 76ers' 89-88 victory over the Indiana Pacers on Monday night.

Korver hit five 3-pointers and finished with 17 points. Kenny Thomas scored 12 for the Sixers, who opened a four-game homestand and moved into first place by a half-game over Boston in the Atlantic Division.

Stephen Jackson scored 25 points and Jermaine O'Neal had 21 points and 10 rebounds for the Pacers, who lost their fifth straight.

Rockets 97, Celtics 94

In Boston, Yao Ming had 23 points and Jon Barry scored 15 of his 17 in the fourth quarter, leading the Rockets over the Celtics.

Houston blew a 16-point lead but rallied behind Barry, who scored 11 points in the first 2:57 of the fourth, to snap a two-game skid and move back to .500 on the road. The Rockets have won four straight in Boston.

Ricky Davis scored 17 of his 24 points in the fourth quarter for the Celtics.

Hawks 80, Magic 79

In Atlanta, Antoine Walker hit a fallaway jumper with 2.3 seconds left, and Atlanta beat Orlando despite blowing a 12-point lead in the final five minutes.

Walker shot 4-for-13 and scored only 12 points, but his jumper over Dwight Howard helped the Hawks snap a four-game losing streak.

Steve Francis scored 24 points for the Magic and Grant Hill added 19, but Hill's final shot at the buzzer bounced off the rim.

Tony Delk led the Hawks with 17 points, and Al Harrington added 16.

Grizzlies 98, Hornets 91

In New Orleans, Lorenzen Wright and Stromile Swift each scored 19 points and made key baskets down the stretch, sending the Grizzlies past the Hornets.

Jason Williams scored 14, including a 3-pointer that ended a 10-0 Hornets run in the fourth quarter, and Wright also grabbed 11 rebounds to help the Grizzlies win for the fourth time in five games.

Dan Dickau had 19 points and 12 assists for New Orleans, which trimmed a 12-point deficit to four late in the fourth quarter before Swift and Wright helped Memphis regain control.

Spurs 103, Sonics 84

In Seattle, Manu Ginobili scored 23 points and Tim Duncan had 21 points and 10 rebounds, leading the Spurs to their first victory of the season in three tries against the Sonics.

Tony Parker had 17 points and a season-high 10 rebounds for the Spurs, who have the NBA's best record at 37-10. The Northwest Division-leading Sonics are 30-13.

The Sonics played without All-Star guard and top scorer Ray Allen, who missed his first game of the season because of the flu.

They also were without coach Nate McMillan. He was in Raleigh, North Carolina, following of the death of his mother Sunday. The Sonics were coached by assistant Dwane Casey.

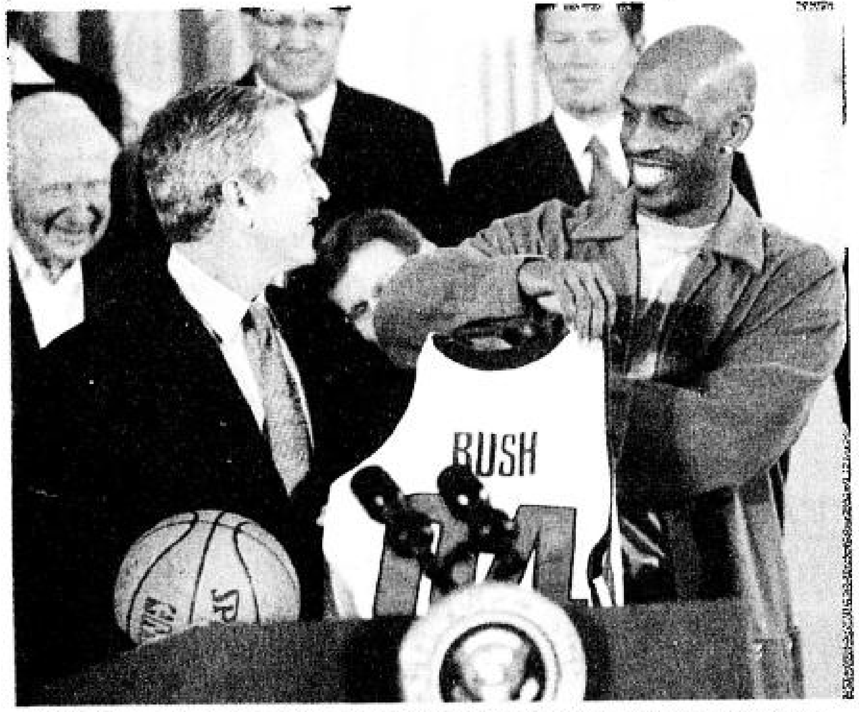
Clippers 96, Knicks 89

In Los Angeles, Elton Brand scored 24 points, and Chris Kaman had 18 points and 10 rebounds to lead Los Angeles past New York.

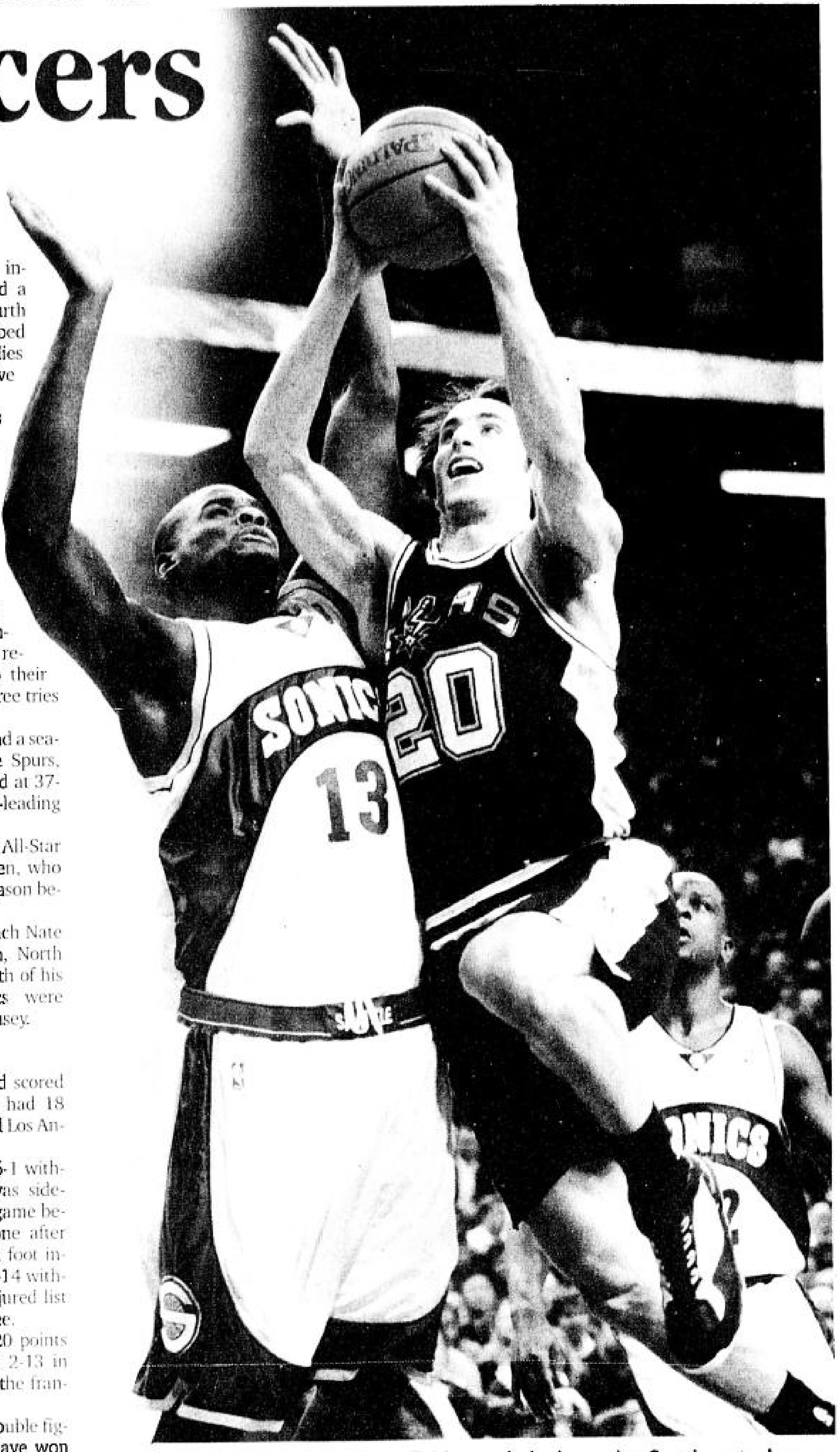
The Clippers improved to 6-1 without Corey Maggette, who was sidelined for the second straight game because of an injured collarbone after missing two last week with a foot injury. New York dropped to 10-14 without Allan Houston, on the injured list with a chronically sore left knee.

Stephon Marbury scored 20 points for the Knicks, who finished 2-13 in January, the worst month in the franchise's 59-year history.

All five starters scored in double figures for the Clippers, who have won four of five following a five-game losing streak. *AP*



FIRST FAN: US President George W. Bush is presented a numbered jersey by Detroit Pistons guard Chauncey Billups at the White House. Bush honored the Pistons, who won the 2004 NBA Championship. REUTERS



SAN ANTONIO swingman Manu Ginobili drives to the basket against Seattle center Jerome James (left). Ginobili topscored for the Spurs as San Antonio crushed Seattle. AP

Technocrats seal NCRAA Final 4 cast

THE RIZAL Technological University Technocrats scored a 101-85 quarterfinal rout of the Polytechnic University of the Philippines Maroons and clinched the last 12th National Capital Region Athletic Association Final Four slot Monday at the Pasay Sports Complex.

It was sweet revenge for the Technocrats, who lost to the Maroons in a title duel in another collegiate league recently.

RTU's victory was its fifth in seven matches and squeezed it in a four-way tie with the Colegio de San Lorenzo Griffins, the Emilio Aguinaldo College Generals and the La Salle-Dasmariñas Patriots.

The Griffins and the Generals have the best quotients among the four teams in the semifinals, giving the two squads the top semifinal seedings, and the crucial twice-to-beat privileges that go along with it.

The Patriots, with John Edward Macalma firing a game-high 16 points, outplayed dethroned champion St. Francis, 76-65, to end up third.

This is the first time that the Doves are out of the semifinal picture.

Tennis stars help tsunami cause

HOUSTON—Andy Roddick, Tommy Haas, John McEnroe, Chris Evert, Anna Kournikova and Jim Courier played a little fun tennis for a big cause Monday night, helping to raise more than $518,000 for tsunami relief.

Roddick, who lost to Lleyton Hewitt in the semifinals of the Australian Open, defeated Haas, 7-6 (6), in the feature match of the event for the Bush-Clinton Fund for Tsunami Relief.

Courier, whose production company put on the event, lost, 6-4, to McEnroe in the opening match.

"Everything's going very smoothly except for the fact that I just lost to a guy who has more gray hair than my father," Courier said about the loss to 45-year-old McEnroe, 12 years his senior.

The Houston Chronicle reported in its Tuesday editions that one person who insisted on anonymity paid $250,000 for 50 seats at the benefit at the Toyota Center and the United States Tennis Association contributed $25,000. Former President George H.W. Bush accepted a giant check for $518,952.

Evert praised the current players who participated in the event.

"They flew all the way in from Australia for this," she said. "In my day, we never played charity events (during the season). To see Andy fly over after a very disappointing loss—I'm sure he's not very happy right now—that's really impressive."

McEnroe said it's about players understanding their roles.

"Andy Roddick gets it, and Jim Courier gets it," he said. "Tennis needs events like this, innovations, new ways to reach out to the fans. It's for a great cause, obviously, and it's also very good for the game. Jim has credibility because he has won (three Grand Slams)."

The event was to help relief efforts in Asia where the tsunami, triggered by an earthquake on Dec. 26, killed more than 156,000 people in 11 countries. *AP*

ANNA Kournikova also joined the project and paired off with Dr. Phil McGraw (left) for the doubles competition. AP

RODDICK: Impressive

La Salle women's tennis champs

DE LA SALLE extended its domination of UAAP women's lawn tennis Sunday by beating Ateneo, 2-1, even as University of the East (UE) foiled University of Santo Tomas' bid of sweeping the best-of-three championship series for the girls' volleyball crown.

The Lady Archers streaked to their third straight women's tennis title, the most in the league since the sport was included four years ago. UST was the first UAAP women's tennis champion.

Ateneo actually gained the headstart with Czarina Mae Arevalo beating Berry Sepulvida in the opening singles, 6-0, 6-0, at the Rizal Racket Club in Pasig City.

But De La Salle took the doubles courtesy of Catherine Flores and Sherry Ong over Vanessa Co and Lady Krystle Tanmantion, 6-1, 6-1, before Michelle Panis nailed the title for the Lady Archers with a 6-3, 6-3 win over Deena Rose Cruz in the closing singles.

"We are very happy [about the result]. It just showed that we are really favorites, this being our third title in the young history of the women's tournament," said La Salle coach Roland Kraut as he thanked team managers Bobby de Ocampo, Vince Pacheco, and Season 67 president and La Salle sports director Danny Jose and the alumni who watched the games.

UST, the defending girls' volleyball champion, won Game 1 of the race-to-two series, 25-17, 25-23, 21-25, 25-19, Saturday but yielded to the UE girls in Game 2 Sunday, 25-15, 20-25, 25-19, 19-25, 14-13.

Hostilities kicked off in taekwondo at the Santo Tomas gym Saturday and the Tigers and Tigresses, the defending champions, kicked their way to a sweep of their first three assignments. *rk*

Tiger no longer above everyone—Els

WOODS: No longer as dominant

MELBOURNE, Australia—Ernie Els says golf technology and a more competitive tour means Tiger Woods won't be as dominant as he once was.

"Everybody has become better players, technology has brought everybody closer together," Els said Tuesday at the Heineken Classic, where he begins play Thursday trying for his fourth win in a row at Royal Melbourne.

"I think he's had a very good start obviously, but I can't see him being that dominant again. The guys out there are a lot more confident, they've stepped up to their games. No one is hitting it 30 or 40 yards past everybody else."

Woods won the Dunlop Phoenix tournament in Japan last November, then shot four rounds in the 60s to win his Target World Challenge against a 16-man field to finish the year.

Ten days ago, Woods rallied from a two-shot deficit over the final six holes to win the Buick Invitational for his first US PGA Tour victory in 11 months.

Vijay Singh took over the No. 1 ranking from Woods last September, a position Woods had held for five years. But Woods has gone 10 majors without winning, matching his longest winless streak in Grand Slam events.

"Technology has changed the game," added Els. "Twelve to 15 years ago, before titanium drivers and new golf balls, it was a different game.

"At the moment, he (Woods) is playing better, and more confident. But other guys will be right there. I don't think he'll be that dominant again, although I might be wrong."

Els kept pace with Singh and Woods by finishing in a tie for third, second, and a tie for sixth in his first three tournaments of 2005, including a runner-up finish to Singh at the Sony.

He took last week off for a holiday with his family before flying to Melbourne for his shot at a four-peat at the Heineken.

"This tournament has been like a dream for me, but it's like anything: you win it three times in a row, so can four be possible?" Els said before a nine-hole practice round on the revamped Royal Melbourne composite layout.

The course has been reduced to a par 71, making the 10th hole a par four, a move Els called a "good move."

Last year, Els opened with a 60 in perfect scoring conditions, flirting with a 59 when he missed birdie putts on the final two holes.

But he shot a 2-over 74 in the final round when a northerly breeze was blowing, just eking out a one-shot win over Adam Scott when Scott left a birdie putt on the 18th inches short that would have forced a playoff.

"Last year I had a perfect start, but I've also won this tournament when I've come from behind and shot 65 on the final day," said Els.

"I hadn't seen a northerly since the Presidents Cup in 1998. It caught me off guard, on the front nine I shot a 42. But I had a great back nine."

Els doubts he or anyone else will threaten to shoot 59 again at Royal Melbourne.

Last year in the opening round, more than 90 golfers in the field of 156 broke par and 50 shot 69 or better in the ideal conditions.

"How many times do you get a chance to shoot 59, but I had a golden chance last year," said Els of his course-record 60. "I bogeyed 15, birdied 16 but couldn't get a birdie on the last two holes." *AP*

ANGELO Que looks forward to a big season. PDI PHOTO

Que itches for bigger Asian Tour battles

By Jong Arcano

ANGELO Que is still getting the hang of being the only regular Filipino campaigner in the Asian Tour. But after being in the money in the first two tournaments of the season, the Vietnam Open champ is feeling the itch for the bigger battles ahead.

His star is definitely on the rise and Que seems out to prove that he can do it for the Philippines. On his own.

The 26-year-old Que is currently ranked seventh in the Order of Merit based on the recently released rankings, ahead of Asian hotshots like Thongchai Jaidee of Thailand, Simon Yates of Scotland and Jyoti Randhawa of India.

Not since the glory days of Frankie Miñoza has a Filipino been ranked so high in the money list.

Que wound up 25th in the season-opening Okinawa Open in Japan and was pursuing the leaders in last week's Caltex Singapore Open at the Laguna National Golf Club until a final-round hiccup saw him slip to a tie for 18th.

With winnings of $20,363 (P1.1 million) in just two events, Que can, at least, have peace of mind unlike a lot of local pros struggling due to the dearth of tournaments.

"I got struck with a bad round on the last day in Singapore but that's golf. It only shows that I need to work even harder," said Que.

Que was particularly happy at having contributed something for the fund-raising drive staged by the Asian Tour for the tsunami victims last Dec. 26.

He finished four rounds at Laguna National with 17 birdies worth a corresponding amount pledged earlier by tournament sponsors also for the region's other golfing ambassadors like Jaidee and Danny Chia of Malaysia.

"It's always nice working for something charitable other than your own personal motives," he said.

When the INQUIRER called, Que was roused from a sound sleep. But he didn't mind.

He knows that it's part of the perks of being the new hot male golfer in town.

Cop-wannabe paces National Caddies tilt

By Musong R. Castillo

CALATAGAN, Batangas—Jerome Malaga wanted to be a cop, but poverty pushed him to try his luck with a golf club instead.

Armed with a sound swing, the smarts for the game and the desire for a better life, Malaga shot a four-over 76 under stifling heat yesterday for a one-shot lead after 18 holes of the first National Caddies Open.

A bachelor at 29, Malaga displayed an array of shots uncommon for one with no formal technical background, capping his round with a birdie on the par-5 18th to lead Apo Golf's Jonel Ababa and Zamboanga Golf Club's Ricardo Bustamante by a shot.

Malaga, dropping out after just one semester of a criminology course, also showed poise, regrouping mightily after stumbling with four straight bogeys from No. 6 and getting back a shot he lost on the par-5 13th with that birdie in the last hole.

Born and raised in Bacolod, Malaga also showed a short fuse after the round, almost flaring up when asked to name the club he represents in the tournament presented by the FG Sports Foundation and Pagcor and backed by San Miguel Corp., Nike and the Philippine Sports Commission.

Malaga blasted the Marapara Golf Club for not giving him the support to compete here, even after participating in a qualifying event the club had set.

"If not for Mr. [Alex] Montelibano, I wouldn't have made it here," said Malaga in Filipino. "I refuse to represent Marapara because it did not give us the support to come over here—not even money for a boat ride to Manila."

Malaga carries Montelibano's bags wherever the golf patron plays in Bacolod. He had given up hope of coming over, until Montelibano talked him into it and personally handed him the money for his expenses.

Jonel, a nephew of the great Ababas of the last two decades, had four birdies, five bogeys and two doubles to share second spot with Bustamante, a short-hitting 29-year-old from Upper Kalarian in Zambo City.

Rufino Bayron turned in a 41 in his first nine holes and settled for a 79, good enough for a three-way tie for fourth with Ranel Glimada of Apo Golf and Ernie Pagunsan of Manila Golf.

Ruben dela Rosa of Wack Wack, Alvin Mijares and Danile Nivera of Valley, Enrico Opinion of Veteran's and Elardo Pedro of the Philippine Navy all submitted 80s to share seventh spot.

Joseph Labajo and Antonio Lucanas, representing Valley, and Gerardo Basijan of Evercrest Cebu were joined by six others in 12th spot after 81s with eight others tied for 22nd place another stroke back.

The first day in this tough Robert Trent Jones creation claimed nearly 40 of the 136 players who teed off.

MARK Miñoza plays out from a stymie. JESS YUSON

La Salle golf meet fires off

LA SALLE'S top guns will show their wares and vie for honors while they contribute to a noble endeavor when the 13th Drive for a Cause Golf Tournament fires off today at the Manila Southwoods Golf and Country Club.

Among the prominent La Salle sportsmen expected to see action are Games and Amusements Board chair Eric Buhain, former Philippine Sports Commission chair Carlos "Butch" Tuason and former PSC commissioner Ricardo Garcia.

To benefit from the proceeds of the annual fund-raising project in support of the La Salle Christian Brothers' outreach programs for the less-fortunate are the Adult Night High School, Street Children Program, Signum Fidei and Big Brother Project.

The event is hosted by the La Salle Greenhills Alumni Association (LSGHAA), in cooperation with LSGH Class '80.

Tee-off time is from 6:30-9:30 a.m., while the awarding ceremonies will be held on Saturday, 4-6 p.m., to coincide with the Alumni Homecoming hosted by this year's Silver Jubilarians Class '80.

Arroyo leads National Pro-Am guests roster

ARROYO PDI PHOTO

FIRST Gentleman Mike Arroyo will top bill the list of illustrious guests hitting the ceremonial ball in the Konica Minolta National Pro-Am on Feb. 8-12 at Riviera's Langer in Silang, Cavite.

The NGAP-sanctioned tournament will have Arroyo at the head of distinguished personalities that include former President Fidel V. Ramos, incumbent NGAP president Benny Gopez and Shoei Yamana, the executive director of Konica Minolta Business Technologies Corp. of Japan.

They will hit the ceremonial tee shots in the Celebrity Tournament on Feb. 8 in the company of Bert Bravo, top honcho of the sponsoring U-Bix Corp.; Rod V. Feliciano, NGAP chair, and Commodore Danny Pizarro, the Riviera president.

Bravo and Yamana have upped the pot to P1.5 million in the event supported by Riso, Epson, Brother Office, Casio, Okamura, Planex Network, ServiceMaster, Terminix, Merry Maids, Grappa's Ristorante, Caffe Appassionato, Pivo Praha, WineMaster, Pagcor, DHL-WWW Express, PSC, Bravo Golf, Toyota Motor Phils. and Rowell Group.

Reigning titlist Gerard Cantada and JR Tanpinco are back like 2001 winner Noli Kempis and Erwin Vinluan and 2002 champions Raul and Paul Miñoza in the event that stakes the all-new Toyota Hi-Lux as hole-in-one prize both in the Celebrity Tournament and regular event.

Kempis has a new partner in Korean Kim Chang Hoi while Vinluan is paired with national coach Roger Retuerto.

Only 110 teams will be accepted in the event staking the glistening Bravo Cup and will have Taby Tabaniag, Jake Ayson and Al Mendoza as rules officials. Registration centers are at the NGAP offices (5256987, 5245160) and Riviera (8889127, 046-2868, 046-4142387).

Mango Tee begins today

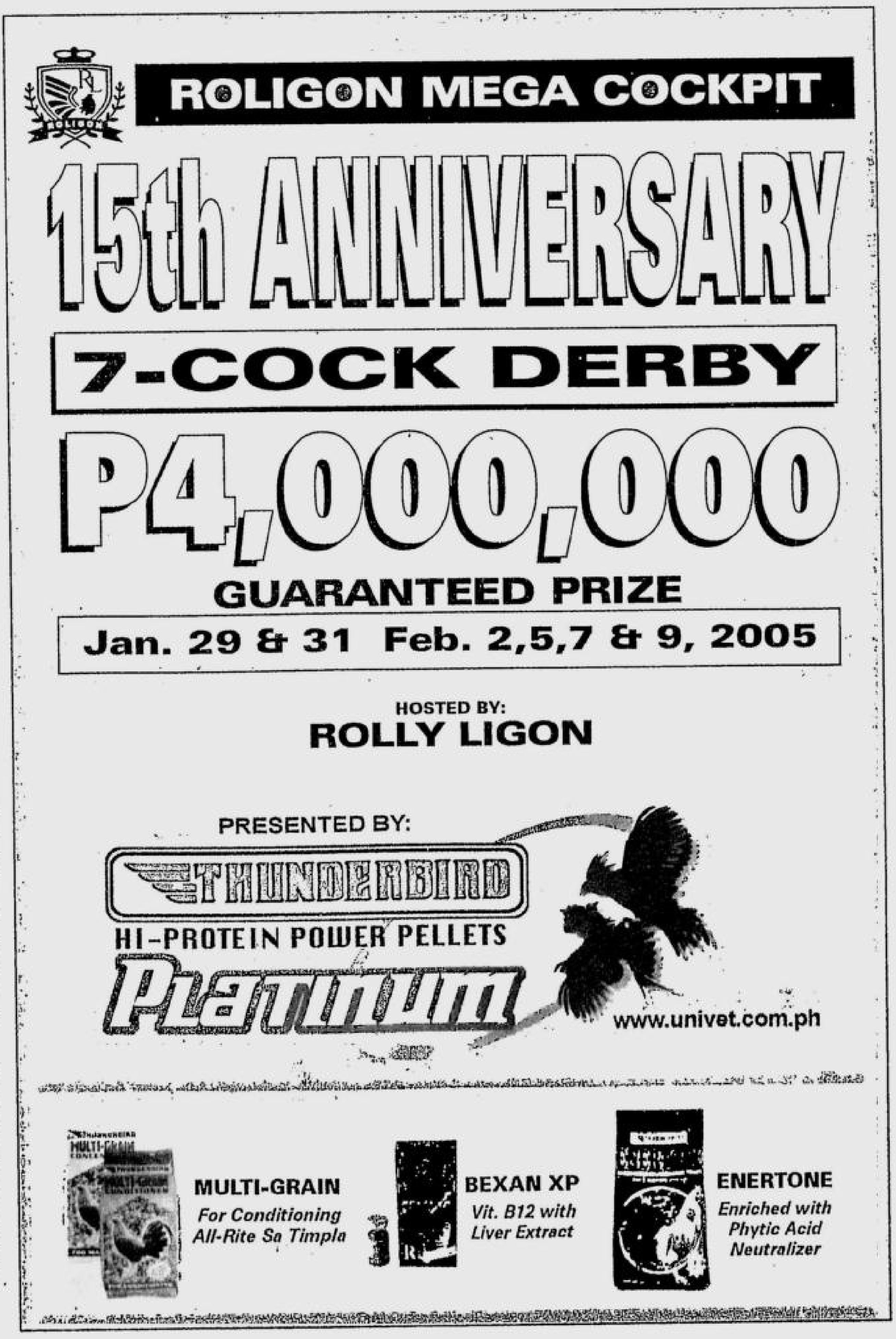
THE ALABANG Country Club raises the curtain for the 21st Mango Tee member-guest tournament presented by Smart Communications and Pilipinas Shell today with the first batch of the 640-player roster playing at the Alabang course.

Former president Fidel V. Ramos fired the first ceremonial shot of the tournament in Monday's opening rites where he was joined by Fernando Balatbat, president of the host club, and top officials of sponsoring companies.

Also present were Smart Communications president Boy Martirez, Pilipinas Shell's Bobby Kanapi, Mitsubishi Motors Phils. Inc. CEO and president Kengo Takase and MMPI SEVP for Marketing Yoshiaki Ichimura, Citimotors president Paul Ching, Sharp Philippines president Mitsunobu Hattori, Mike Osmeña of Golf Depot and Ernest Paguia of TaylorMade adidas.

Today's batch will get first crack at the four Mitsubishi cars—the Montero and Grandis, Adventure and Lancer GLS—put up by MMPI and Citimotors as hole-in-one prizes. Carts from Turf Co. (Club Car) and Kart Plaza Manufacturing (Yamaha) will serve as bonus prizes for aces on designated holes.

SPONSORS of the Mango Tee and officials of the Alabang Country Club pose on the 10th tee after the opening ceremonials.



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Vit. B12 with
Liver Extract
ENERTONE
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Neutralizer

Karen, Ces deny role in Lucy Torres...

From page A28

Not passing on gossip

Ces, in a phone interview with INQUIRER Entertainment also last Monday, said she wasn't surprised when she read Lucy's article, even as she denied that she had spread the klepto rumor during a party in which she and Mayor JV Ejercito were among the guests.

"My friend [Monique Ignacio] called me and said Lucy was asking if I had discussed it with JV," said Ces. "I said, 'Yes, but I did not say that Lucy is a klepto.' I admitted talking to JV [about the rumor], but I didn't tell it to him as fact or that I assumed it was true. I asked JV if it were true.

"I told my friend to kindly tell (Lucy) that I was simply asking if this were true and I was not passing on gossip. Then I read her article yesterday [Sunday] and there was the JV sentence, which is not true."

Lucy said she did not know Ces personally and that she did not expect the news anchor to come to her defense.

"She's not just a run of the mill newscaster," said Lucy. "I expect a lot from a newscaster. But assuming that she said what she said, I cannot also accept that she's just throwing things lightly. If it comes from a person as respectable as she is, then other people would think it is the truth."

'She didn't start this'

In a phone interview with Ejercito, the mayor told INQUIRER Entertainment that "Ces asked me if I heard about the rumor."

"In fairness to Ces, she did not say it as (fact)," said JV. "We were talking about text messages that were spreading the rumor. I told Goma [Richard Gomez] about the rumor. I told him I had heard it during a party where people were talking about such a rumor going around. *Hanggang doon lang* (It was only that)."

> 'In fairness to Ces, she did not say it as [fact],' said JV. 'We were talking about the text messages'

Lucy pointed out she was not blaming Ces.

"I accept the fact that she did not start this (rumor)," said Lucy. "That much I know. She did not concoct this in her mind. It's just unfortunate that she was quoted as saying, among other newscasters in the whole of Manila who would have commented about it."

She said it could be small talk during a party, "but it still doesn't make it right."

"But that's just me," said Lucy. "You would never know how it feels unless you were in my shoes."

Clearing the air

Ces said that she's also a victim in this issue.

"I think I'm a victim here," she said. "My regret is I did not talk to Lucy when Monique called me. But I thought they would pass on the message already. I told Monique that I remember asking JV if it were true because at that time, we were talking about text messages going around about Lucy. I asked JV because I knew he was a friend of Goma."

She said she had also sent Lucy a text message clearing her role in the issue. The text message, which she forwarded to INQUIRER Entertainment, said, "Good morning, Lucy! Ces Drilon here. I read your article in the Star yesterday and watched a portion of your interview on 'S-Files' as well. Anyway, I'm sending this text because while I am the ABS anchor you referred to who talked with JV, I never told him 'Lucy is a klepto.' I never, never assumed those talk going around was true. I don't remember how your name cropped up in the conversation, but I do remember asking him if the incident at Rustan's where you were accused of kleptocracy (*sic*) was true. I did not pass it on as fact. I'm sending this text to clear the air between you and me. I respect and admire you, and it's not my habit to pass gossip as fact. Thanks for the time. Hope you have a good day."

Goma assured

Karen Davila also denied that she had a surveillance tape from Rustan's showing Lucy shoplifting from the store.

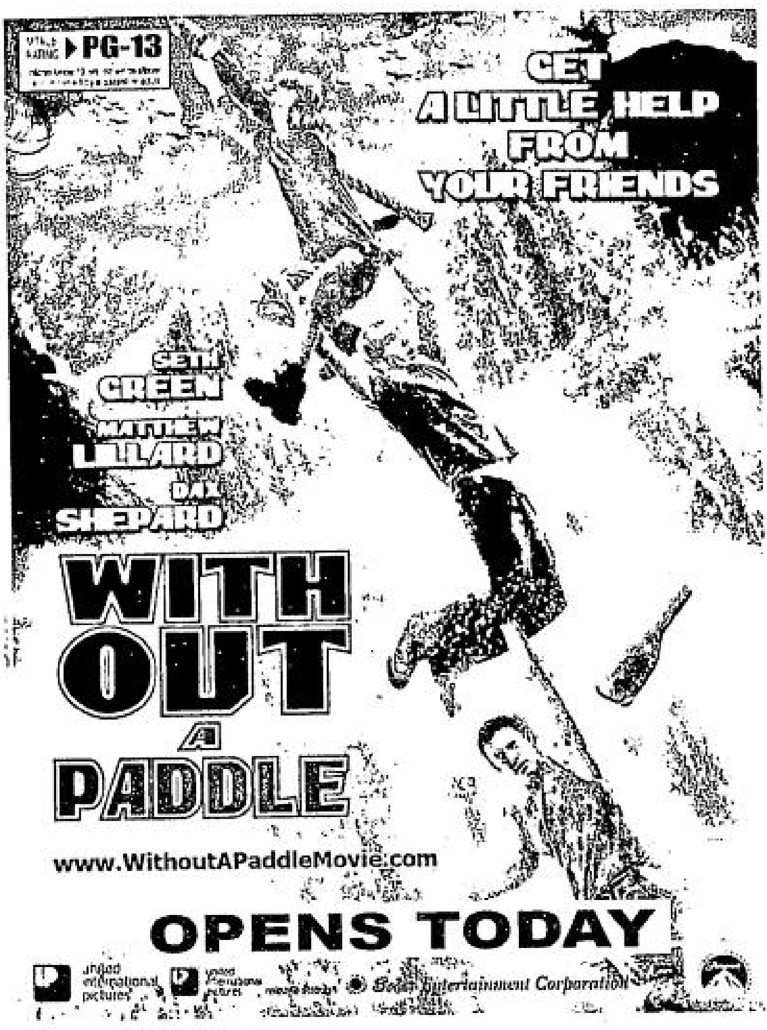
"What happened was Richard called me last year asking if I had a tape," Karen told INQUIRER Entertainment in a phone interview also last Monday. "I assured him I did not have a tape and told him that even if we had it we would not air it on 'The Correspondents.' I also told him not to worry about us hitting Lucy in my radio show 'Pasada Sais Trenta' (on dzMM) with Vic Lima."

Karen said she also told Richard that she didn't know where he was getting his information.

"But we ended the talk nicely," she said. "He even told me that if we had the tape, he wouldn't stop us from airing it."

Lucy said she wants people who claimed to have the tape to air it.

"My conscience is clear," said Lucy. "I don't have anything to hide."


PG-13
GET A LITTLE HELP FROM YOUR FRIENDS
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From the director of "Amelie" comes another heartwarming film...
A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
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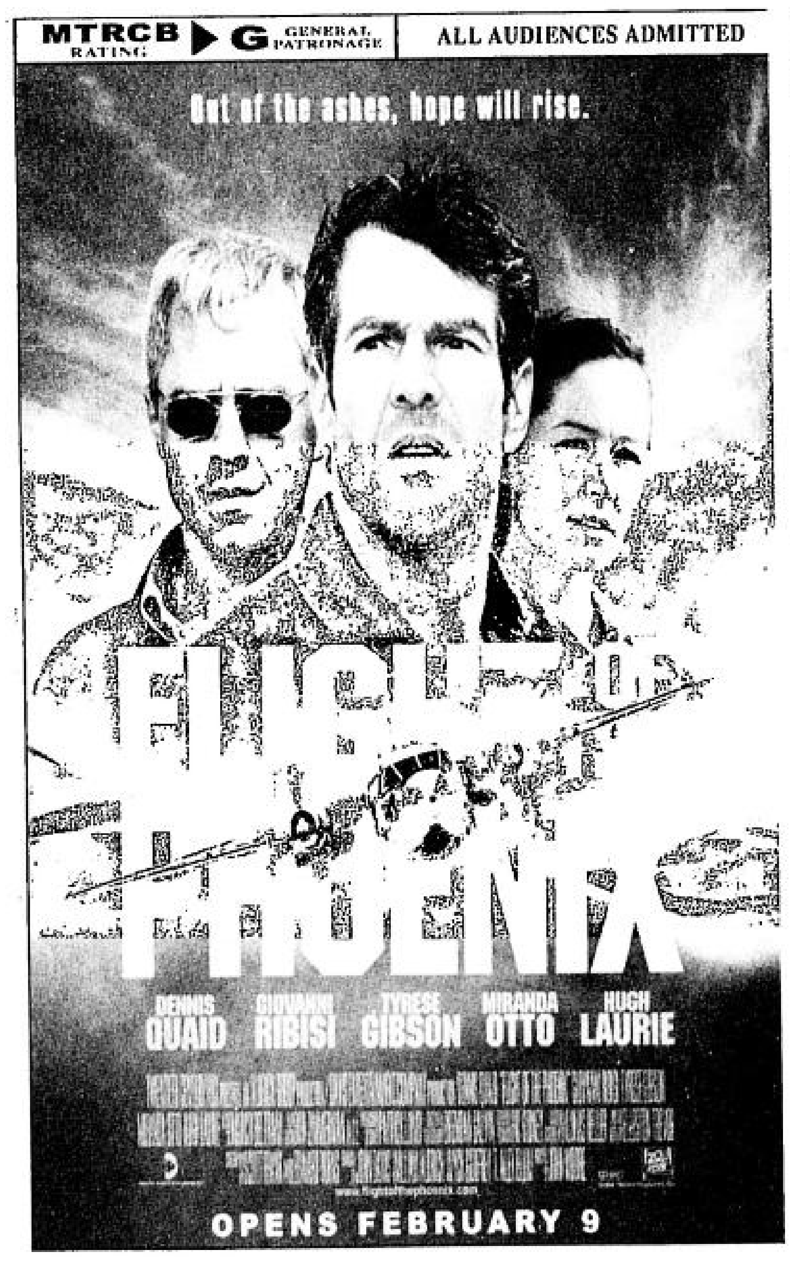
MTRCB Rating: R-13
MOVIEWORLD
AUDREY TAUTOU
A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
JEAN-PIERRE JEUNET
From the heartache of war began a journey of hope.


MTRCB RATING G GENERAL PATRONAGE
ALL AUDIENCES ADMITTED
Out of the ashes, hope will rise.
FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX
DENNIS QUAID
GIOVANNI RIBISI
TYRESE GIBSON
MIRANDA OTTO
HUGH LAURIE
OPENS FEBRUARY 9

PG-13
3RD WEEK!
AMERICA'S #1 IS ALSO MANILA'S #1!
Robert DeNiro
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Barbra Streisand
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Misery loves family.
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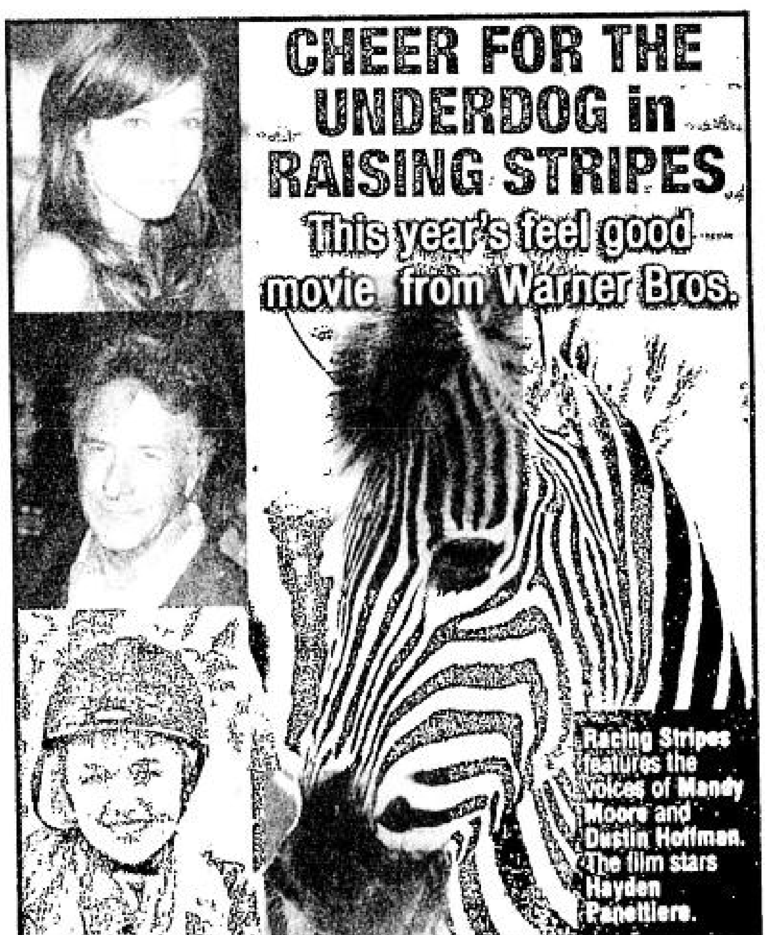

CHEER FOR THE UNDERDOG in RAISING STRIPES
This year's feel good movie from Warner Bros.
Racing Stripes features the voices of Mandy Moore and Dustin Hoffman. The film stars Hayden Panettiere.

"When a baby zebra is accidentally abandoned by a traveling circus, a kindly farmer named Nolan Walsh *(Bruce Greenwood)* rescues the trembling foal and takes it home to be raised by his animal-mad daughter, Channing *(Hayden Panettiere)*. Young Stripes *(with the voice of Frankie Muniz of "Malcolm in the Middle")* grows up believing that like the Kentucky thoroughbreds on the other side of the fence, he is a born racehorse.

After a few humiliating matchups with his far faster equine counterparts, Stripes vows to devote his life to training for the "Kentucky Championship Open," and - to everyone's astonishment - the little zebra winds up in the winner's circle. This fun film manages to combine an endearingly dinky quality with a hefty dose of directorial ambition. While children will be thrilled to the spectacle of animals that talk, their parents will imagine the nightmare of directing a feature-length film with mainly nonhuman actors.

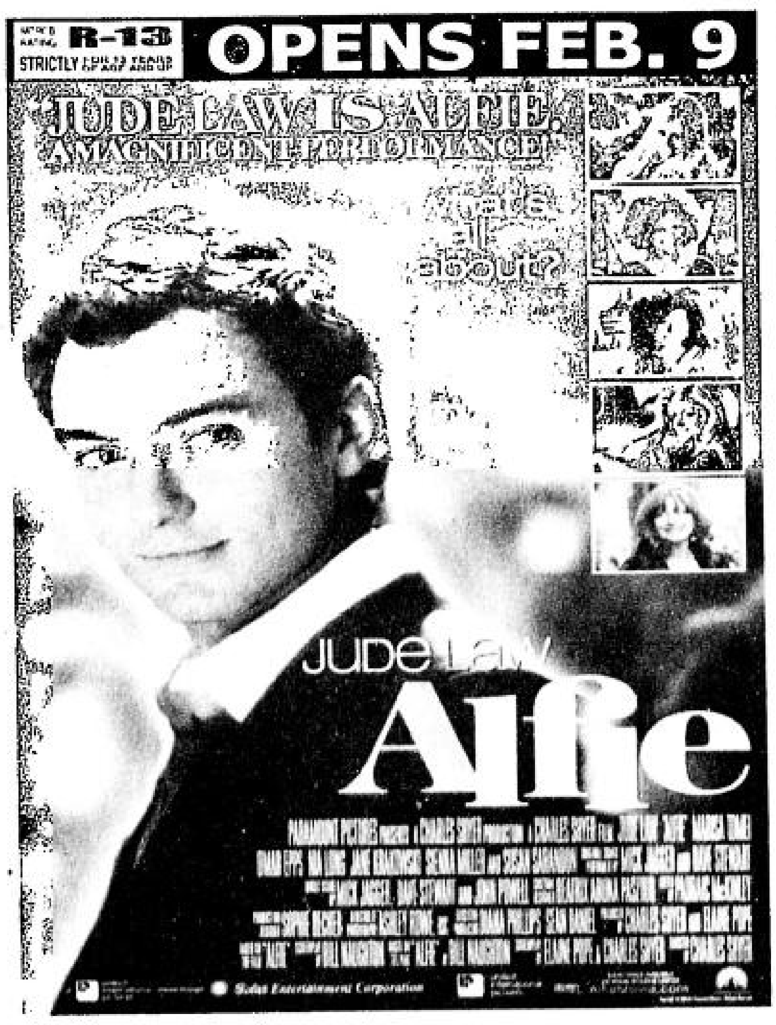
The live animals speak through computer-animated mouths. Its a great improvement since "Babe" and you have to respect the craftsmanship behind this film done by the same FX team that gave you "Val Helsing" and "The Mummy."

The vocal talent is top-notch: Dustin Hoffman, as a gruff Shetland pony named Tucker, is so precise in his delineation of the character that by the end of the film, the animal has come to resemble the bewigged Hoffman in "I love Huckabees."

Other celebrity beasties include Mandy Moore as a sexy filly, Whoopi Goldberg as a levelheaded goat and Joe Pantoliano as Goose, a big-city pelican on the run from the mob. Mr. Pantoliano's frenetic dialogue is laced with "Sopranos" and "Godfather" references that are at once too sophisticated to amuse youngsters and too pointless to entertain their parents, but the gangling bird's broad physical comedy will hit its mark with both.

Steve Harvey and David Spade, as two scatologically inclined flies named Buzz and Scuzz ...they are hilarious. [Steve Rhodes, NEW YORK TIMES]•

ADVT.


R-13
OPENS FEB. 9
JUDE LAW IS ALFIE
A MAGNIFICENT PERFORMANCE
What's it all about?
JUDE LAW
Alfie
Solar Entertainment Corporation

CHINA CRISIS

BINONDO INVADES ROCKWELL
Wushu and Tai-chi Exhibition • Lion and Dragon Dance
Feng Shui Consultation • Little Chinatown
FEBRUARY 1 TO 13

POWER PLANT MALL

OPENS FEB. 16
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WINNER
GOLDEN GLOBE BEST PICTURE
SIDEWAYS
FROM THE DIRECTOR OF ELECTION AND ABOUT SCHMIDT

ANA FEGI

JAY-R

Spend a musical Valentine at Dish

DISH is where it's at in this hearty month of February—with Ana Fegi, South Border, Lynn Sherman, Nyoy Volante, Side A, Freestyle, and specials that include a Smokey Mountain reunion and Jay-R as your musical Valentine date.

Tuesdays of February are retro nights as the Bloomfields, a bunch of teeners with a Beatles and Beach Boys fixation, take to the stage. Sharing the stage on these nights is Cool Change, another hot new band to watch out for.

Wednesdays, as always, bring the Flintstones and its brand of nostalgia. The '60s and '70s have never sounded better.

Ana Fegi has always been one of the purest voices around. She does a series of gigs at Dish, promising to also show a more fiery, dance-inspired side of her. She starts on Saturday, Feb. 5, and returns for two Thursdays, Feb. 10 and 24, plus one more Saturday, Feb. 19.

Also Feb. 5, King shares the bill, while R&B masters K24/7 also perform on Feb. 19.

Other Thursdays include the fun band Retrospect on Feb. 3, and Nyoy Volante and Mannos on Feb. 17.

Fridays are top-of-the-bill nights. On Feb. 4, it's South Border and the new band of Lana Jalosjos called Svetlana and Motownground.

On Feb. 18, it's Side A with Barbie's Cradle. Barbie's Cradle returns on Feb. 25, with Freestyle this time.

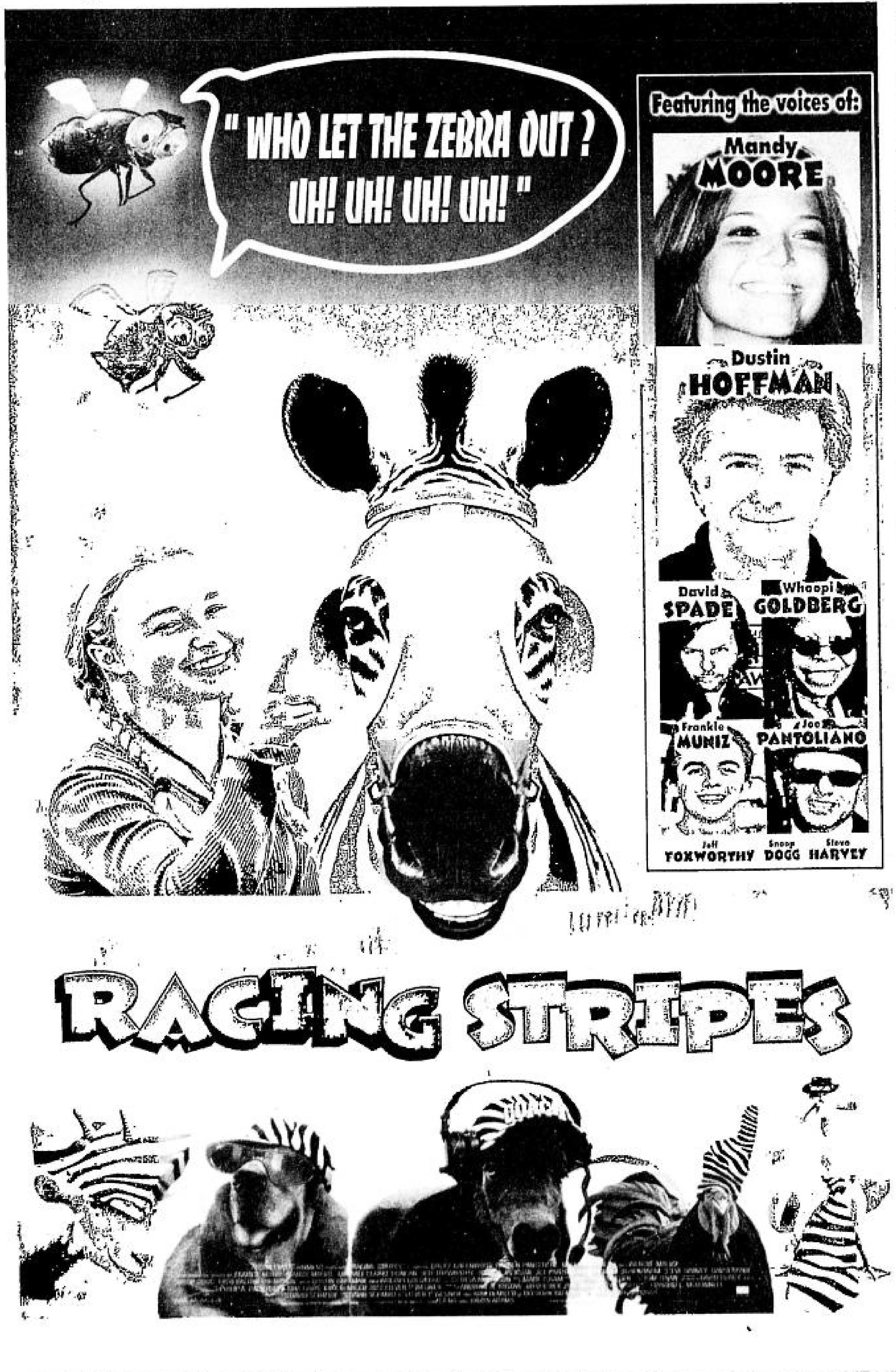
On Friday, Feb. 11, the original Smokey Mountain—Geneva Cruz, Jeffrey Hidalgo, Tony Lambino and James Coronel—bond again for a very special night.

On Saturday, Feb. 12, it's classical pop and jazz when Lynn Sherman, Michael Williams and Pinky Amador bring on the romance.

And as if that isn't enough, on Monday, Feb. 14, who better to heat up the night than the Prince of R&B, Jay-R.

A new improved menu also awaits you at Dish, so call 413-0603 or 4130609 and choose your night.

OPENS TODAY
#1 FEEL GOOD MOVIE OF THE YEAR !


" WHO LET THE ZEBRA OUT ? UH! UH! UH! UH! "
Featuring the voices of:
Mandy MOORE
Dustin HOFFMAN
David SPADE
Whoopi GOLDBERG
Frankie MUNIZ
Joe PANTOLIANO
Jeff FOXWORTHY
Snoop DOGG
Steve HARVEY
RACING STRIPES

JENNIFER GARNER
BORN TO FIGHT.
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of the Week
Richard Gere Jennifer Lopez Susan Sarandon
A new comedy about following your own lead.
Shall we Dance?
MTRCB Rating: G (All ages admitted)
NOW SHOWING

NOW SHOWING

ELEKTRA
MTRCB RATING: PG13
Now Showing at:
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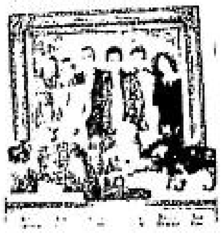
Batangas • Dasmariñas
Marilao • Cebu • Iloilo • Davao
Cagayan de Oro



MEET THR FOCKERS
MTRCB RATING: PG13
Now Showing at:
Bacoor • Dasmariñas • Cebu
Baguio • Pampanga

KUNG FU HUSTLE
MTRCB RATING: PG13
Now Showing at:
Pampanga • Davao • Bacoor
Lucena • Cebu • Iloilo • Baguio
Batangas • Cagayan de Oro

LUZON

sm city pampanga
1 ELEKTRA
2 MAD HOUSE
3 KUNG FU HUSTLE
4 OUT OF REACH
5 HELLWOLF
6 MEET THE FOCKERS

sm city baguio
1 KUNG FU HUSTLE
2 MEET THE FOCKERS
3 UNO
4 ELEKTRA

sm city batangas
1 KUNG FU HUSTLE
2 GEORGE AND THE DRAGON
3 ELEKTRA
4 WHITE NOISE

sm city marilao
1 WHITE NOISE
2 OCEAN'S TWELVE
3 HAYOP BA PORMA, HAYOP SA GANDA
4 BLADE TRINITY

sm city bacoor
1 HAYOP BA PORMA, HAYOP SA GANDA
2 KUNG FU HUSTLE
3 ELEKTRA
4 BLADE TRINITY
5 MEET THE FOCKERS
6 WHITE NOISE
7 MAD HOUSE
8 OCEAN'S TWELVE

sm city dasmariñas
1 ELEKTRA
2 MAD HOUSE
3 SHALL WE DANCE
4 MEET THE FOCKERS

sm city lucena
1 KUNG FU HUSTLE
2 UNO
3 HELLWOLF
4 RAISE YOUR VOICE

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

sm city cebu
1 ELEKTRA
2 KUNG FU HUSTLE
3 MEET THE FOCKERS
4 IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE
5 HAROLD AND KUMAR
6 OCEAN'S TWELVE
7 BLADE TRINITY
8 ELEKTRA

sm city iloilo
1 MAD HOUSE
2 RESERVED
3 ELEKTRA
4 WHITE NOISE
6 RAISE YOUR VOICE
6 KUNG FU HUSTLE
7 RESERVED
8 GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

sm city davao
1 ELEKTRA
2 WHITE NOISE
3 RAISE YOUR VOICE
4 HAROLD AND KUMAR
5 BIRTH
6 KUNG FU HUSTLE

sm city cagayan de oro
1 KUNG FU HUSTLE
2 WHITE NOISE
3 NED KELLY
4 ELEKTRA

Movies are subject to change without prior notice. [illegible]

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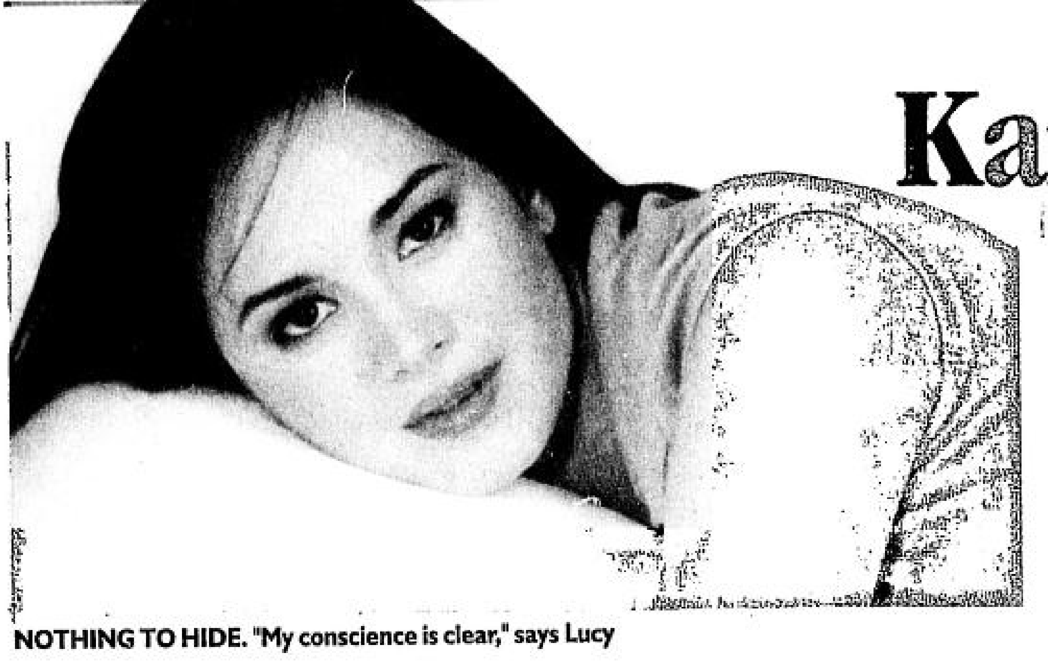
Since 1960
HOME APPLIANCES
Basta Ibay, Yun Yan!
45 years



NOTHING TO HIDE. "My conscience is clear," says Lucy

Karen, Ces deny role in spreading Lucy Torres 'klepto' rumor

'Not just one person told me [Ces] has been telling people I'm a klepto. She was directly quoted. It wasn't like a friend of a friend of a friend [who was quoted]. The one who told us was the person she told it to. How reliable can a newscaster get?'

By Nini Valera

RUMORS can be vicious and talk cheap.

Lucy Torres, wife of actor/TV host Richard Gomez, and broadcasters Ces Drilon and Karen Davila are now entangled in a controversy sparked by a rumor which has escalated because of talk during a party.

The rumor said Lucy was caught shoplifting several times at Rustan's Department Store.

In a phone interview with INQUIRER Entertainment last Monday, Lucy identified Ces as the ABS-CBN anchor she had referred to as the one asking San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito during a gathering if he knew that Lucy was a klepto.

Last Sunday, Lucy wrote about the klepto rumor in her column in another newspaper and talked about it in an interview on "S-Files." In both instances, Ces was not named, but Karen Davila, an ABS-CBN news anchor, was mentioned as supposedly being in possession of a surveillance tape from Rustan's showing Lucy shoplifting from the department store.

"I named Ces in my column and in the interview, but her name was edited out," Lucy explained. "In fairness to Karen, she had nothing to do with this [rumor]."

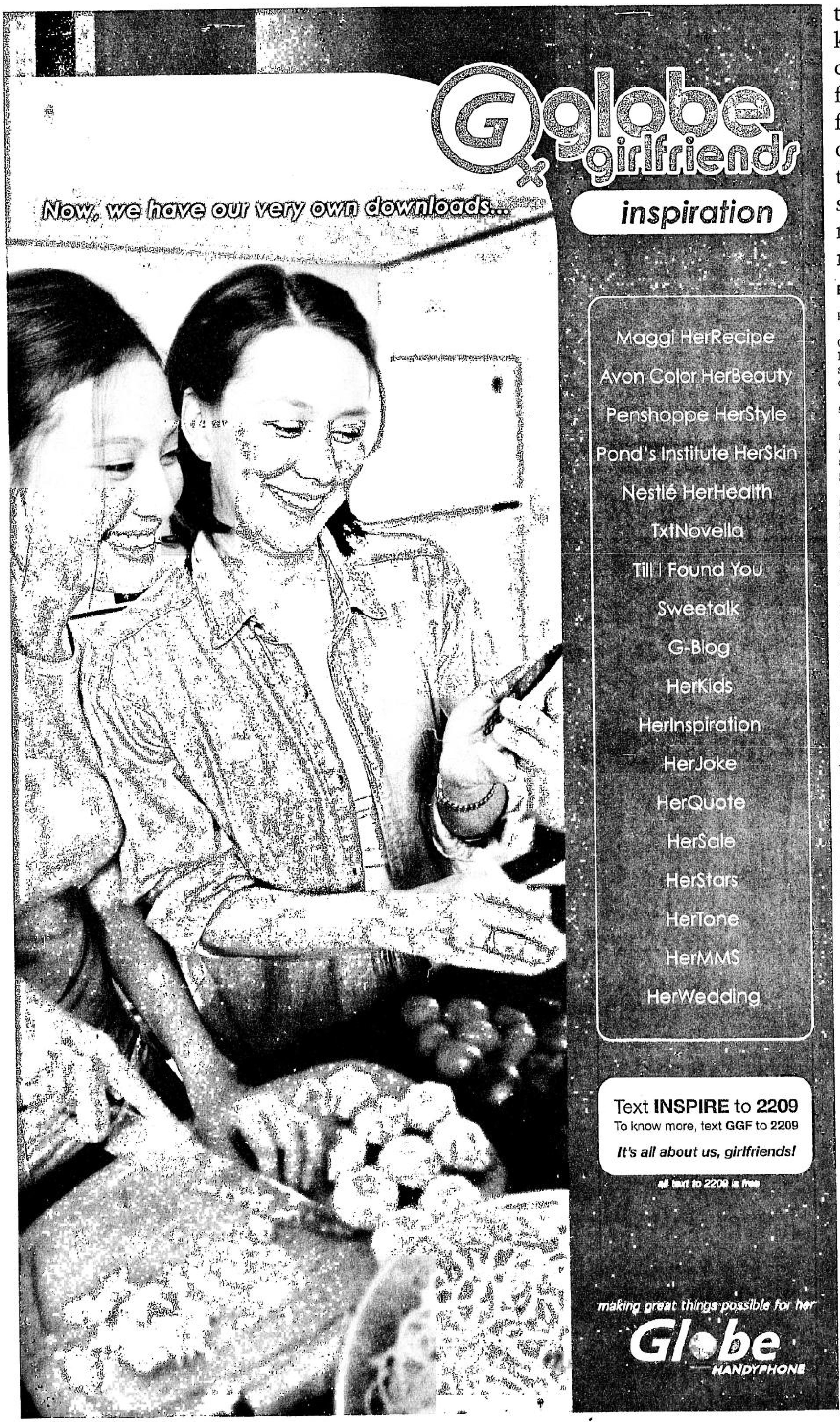
Lucy said that since Ces was not identified in her column, she was also not mentioned in the "S-Files" interview, which was a spin-off of her column.

"Not just one person told me that (Ces) has been telling people that I'm a klepto," said Lucy. "She was directly quoted. It wasn't like a friend of a friend of a friend [who was quoted]. The one who told us was the person she told it to. How reliable can a newscaster get?"

KAREN/ A26

WHAT TAPE? "If we had it, we wouldn't air

TELL LUCY. "I didn't assume it was true," says



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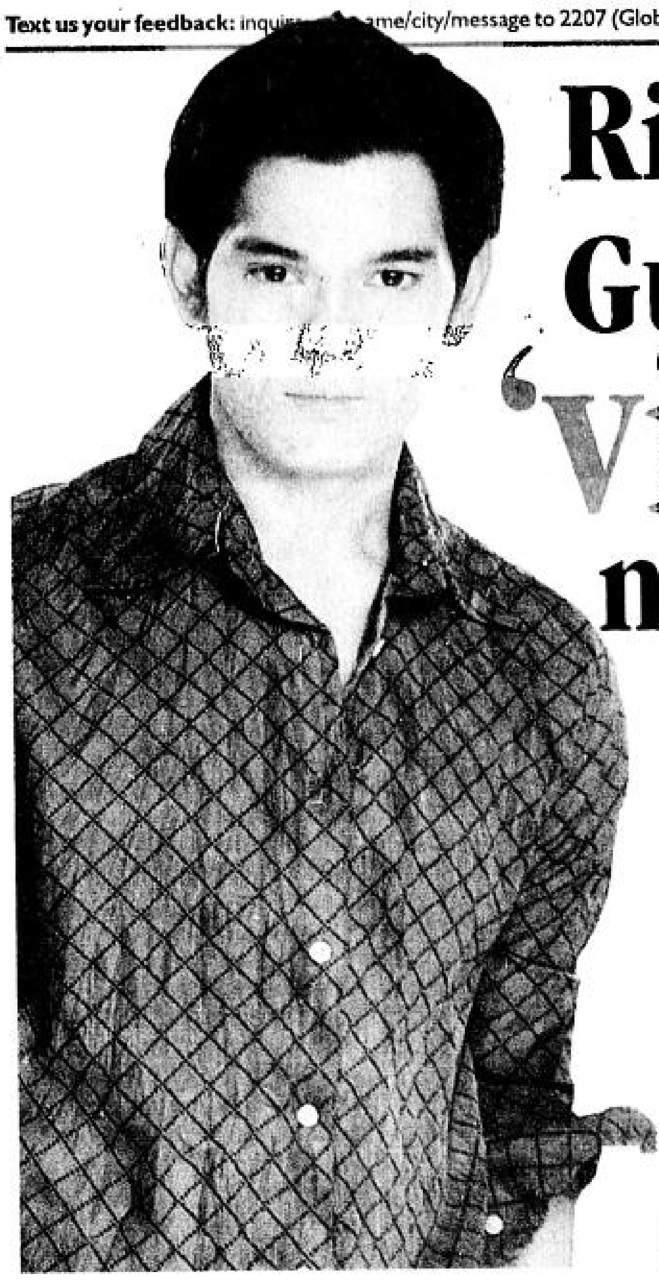
Richard Gutierrez's 'victims' not satisfied with apology



BIRTHDAY BASH. In a TV interview, Richard apologized to "people who were hurt, to my family and my friends"

By Marinel R. Cruz

DISC jockey Arnel Cruz and fashion consultant Ram de Vera said they were not satisfied with the apology made by young actor Richard Gutierrez for punching them, with the help of the actor's friends, outside a bar at The Fort in Taguig City last Saturday night.

"His apology wasn't really directed at me," Cruz told INQUIRER Entertainment in a phone interview last Monday. "It wasn't clear. He has to acknowledge the consequence of what he did."

Cruz said he and De Vera were consulting their lawyers and would file legal charges against Gutierrez "anytime soon."

'Gatecrasher'

Cruz, De Vera and a female companion had just come from Bellisima, a bar in The Fort and were on their way home when Richard's group attacked them, Cruz told the show biz talk show "The Buzz" on ABS-CBN last Sunday.

Richard and his twin brother Raymond were celebrating their birthday at a nearby restaurant bar called Embassy.

Cruz and De Vera claimed they were punched in the face.

In an interview on "S-Files" on GMA 7 also last Sunday, Richard denied being involved in the mauling incident. He claimed he himself was punched in the face by a gatecrasher.

Richard admitted that his friends attacked Cruz, but said they were just trying to get back at the man who had punched him first.

Richard then apologized to "people who were hurt, to my family and my friends." He also said he wanted to

RICHARD/ A2-2

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Excerpts
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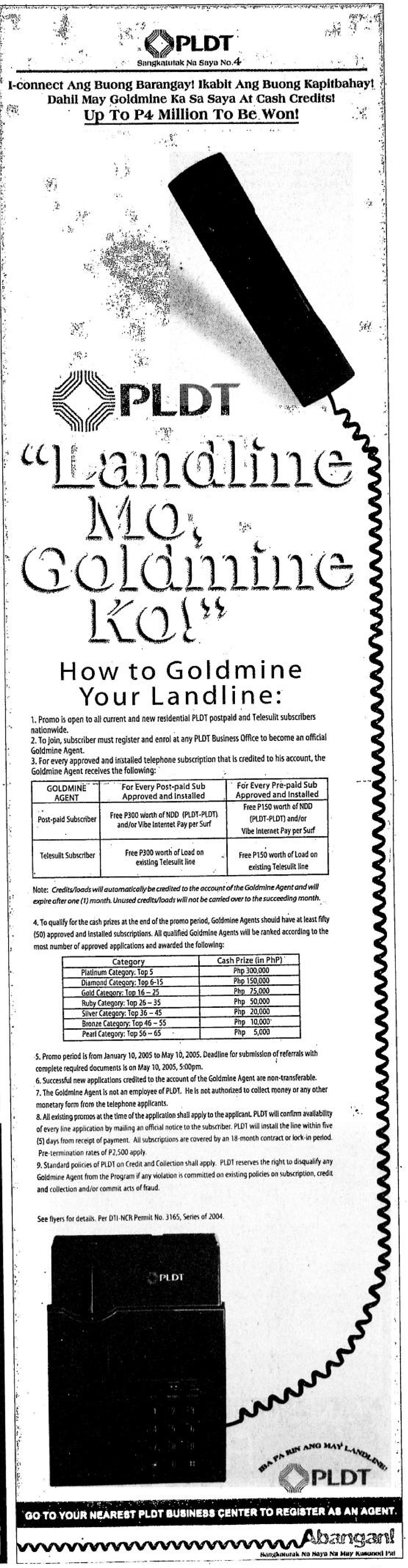

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'Assault on Precinct 13' in the 21st century

A CLASSIC showdown ignites in "Assault on Precinct 13," an all-new update of the 1976 action thriller of the same name by John Carpenter.

With only a few hours left in the calendar year, Precinct 13, one of Detroit's oldest precincts, is closing. Amid heavy snowfall and unsafe road conditions, only a few lawmen remain on duty on New Year's Eve. They are headed by Sgt. Jake Roenick (Ethan Hawke), a good cop wrestling with bad memories of a fatal undercover op from the previous spring.

Roenick and Precinct 13 have both seen better days. Early on Dec. 31, deep in the city, formidable crime lord Marion Bishop (Laurence Fishburne), is cornered by an undercover cop. Their ensuing struggle leaves the cop dead—and Bishop captured by the Organized Crime and Racketeering squad that Marcus Duvall (Gabriel Byrne) runs.

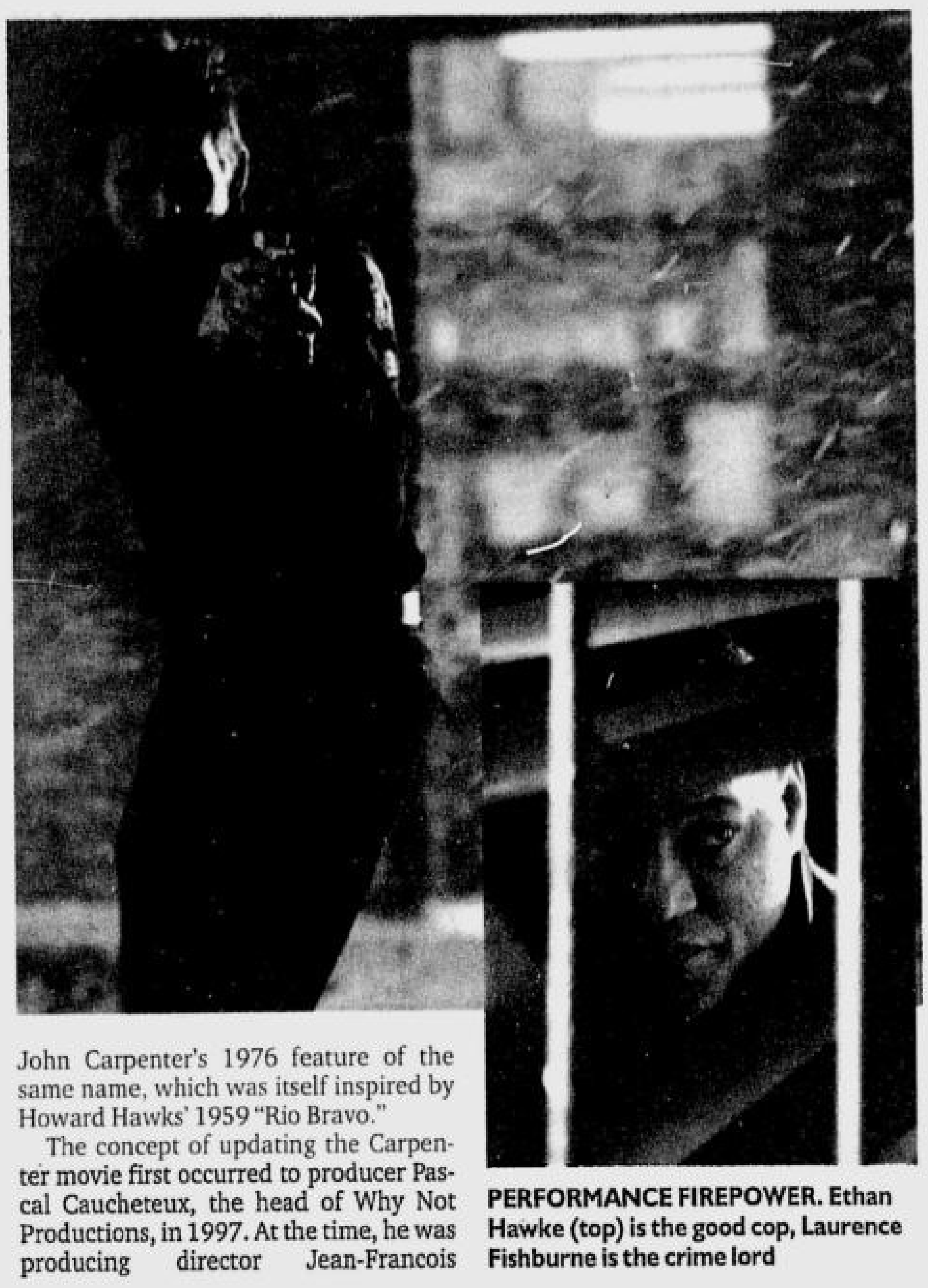
Bishop is herded onto a prison bus with several criminals: junkie Beck (John Leguizamo), hustler Smiley (Jeffrey "Ja Rule" Atkins), and gang member Anna (Aisha Hinds). But the snowstorm stops the bus well short of its high-security destination and strands it at the remote Precinct 13 where, as night falls, the prisoners are temporarily incarcerated.

Rescue attempt

And then two masked gunmen break in and attack the guards from the bus. Everyone inside Precinct 13 realizes that more will come—to extract crime lord Bishop.

As a storytelling torch is carried into the 21st century with "Assault on Precinct 13," performance firepower from the troupe of actors complements and enhances the twists and turns of the all-new film that updates writer/director John Carpenter's 1976 feature of the same name, which was itself inspired by Howard Hawks' 1959 "Rio Bravo."

The concept of updating the Carpenter movie first occurred to producer Pascal Caucheteux, the head of Why Not Productions, in 1997. At the time, he was producing director Jean-Francois Richet's second feature, "Ma 6-T va crack-er" (Crack City).



PERFORMANCE FIREPOWER. Ethan Hawke (top) is the good cop, Laurence Fishburne is the crime lord

INSPIRED FILM. "AP13" was inspired by John Carpenter's '76 thriller which was in turn inspired by Howard Hawke's classic "Rio Bravo" of '59

Reaction film

As executive producer Sebastien Kurt Lemercier, also of Why Not, remembers it, "Pascal was looking at Jean-Francois' film in the editing room and thought there was a feel, a vibrancy to it that reminded him of one of his favorite movies, 'Assault on Precinct 13.' There was an urban western quality to the violence that Jean-Francois had captured which sparked his remembrance of the John Carpenter movie."

Ethan Hawke was the first actor in, cast as the burnt-out cop in charge of Precinct 13.

The "right cast" that Hawke envisioned did indeed end up in the movie. He enthuses, "We got such a good cast because the parts are so well-written, with strong women characters. This is a very well-acted action movie. I'd always wanted to work with Laurence Fishburne. John Leguizamo has been one of my favorite actors for a long time. Drea de Matteo is so good. And we have all these other 'theater rats,' like Brian Dennehy, who gave two of the greatest stage performances I've ever seen, in 'Death of a Salesman' and 'Long Day's Journey Into Night.' Everybody in this cast had to take their turn at 'center stage.' This is a true ensemble movie where, at some point, each person had to carry the weight—and everybody could."

Facing off against Hawke on-screen is Laurence Fishburne as the imposing Marion Bishop. For Fishburne, the evolving dynamic between Bishop and Roenick, the two men on opposite sides of the law, was a key to the new film.

He comments, "It's like the scorpion and the frog. The scorpion has his nature, and his nature is to sting you. Roenick always has to watch his back, because he doesn't know if or when Bishop might turn on him. The characters are so beautifully drawn that you don't always know how things are going to go. Often, you'll think it's going to go one way and it goes in a completely different way."

Richard Gutierrez's 'victims' not satisfied with apology

From page A2-1

meet with Cruz and De Vera "to talk about what happened."

But Cruz and De Vera said they have not received any calls from the Gutierrezes.

'Bribery'

"I'm emotionally numb," De Vera told INQUIRER Entertainment on Monday. "What struck me most about Richard's statement was its inconsistency, and the excessive use of the word bribery. If you review our interviews we never mentioned that word."

Young actor Brian Revilla, son of Sen. Bong Revilla and actress Lani Mercado, admitted he gave money to Cruz that night. "But I didn't bribe him," he told "S-Files." "I just wanted to help."

"I didn't say he bribed me," said Cruz. "I only said somebody tried to give us money. I didn't even say it was Brian Revilla who gave the money.

"I didn't know what the money was for. I found it weird to get money after a brawling. At that time, my ego was the last thing on my mind. I had to deal with a bloodied nose, a hysterical female companion and another companion's bloodied lips. I was thinking about our safety."

Crooked nose

Two days after the incident, Cruz said the bruises on his left eye and cheek were now darker. "I feel pain in my face now. There are certain movements that I can't do. I have a fractured nose. The doctor said it doesn't require surgery but when it heals, it will be crooked."

Cruz, a disk jockey on Dream 105 FM, said he hoped to get back to work on Monday.

De Vera said he, too, was not able to go to work last Monday. "I have a hard time eating because of my split lips. I can't go to work looking like this. I'm a fashion consultant so I have to look presentable.

"I also found it weird that Richard said he didn't know me," De Vera added. "We were personally introduced during a fashion show in Greenbelt. Recently, they [Gutierrezes] have been coming to the store where I work as a fashion consultant. I personally took care of them. I suggested and reserved merchandise for them.

"I have my staff to vouch for that," De Vera stressed. "Why would I lie? What would I get out of it? *Nadamay kami.* It's very unfair. Nobody has the right to just randomly maul people."

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TV GUIDE
Wednesday, February 2, 2005

WEDNESDAY and THURSDAY 10 pm after Big News

American Idol
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Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABS-CBN 2				Showbiz No. 1	Sandara's Romance	Get Backers	Ragnarok	Masked Rider Ryuki	TV Patrol	Spirits	Krystala	Lovers In Paris	Hiram	Star Circle National Teen Quest	Yes Yes Show			Insider	Special Assignment
NBN	Value Vision	Value Vision		Value Vision	Teledyaryo	Value Vision		Talk Ko 'To		Linya		Teledyaryo		Mosconi Cup 2004				Paco Park Presents	
ABC 5			Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko	PBA Game-Bol	PBA				Sentro	PBA					Big News	Look Who's Talking		Philippine Badminton Tournaments	Billboard On-Air
GMA 7	Leya (2:45 PM)	Joyride (3:15 PM)	Snow Angel (3:45 PM)		One Piece	Witch Hunter Robin	Slam Dunk	24 Oras		Extra Challenge		Mulawin	Starstruck (8:45 PM)	Forever In My Heart (9:15 PM)		Nuts Entertainment			Sakal
RPN 9	Metro TV Shopping			Hey Arnold!	As Told By Ginger	Wild Thornberries	Sponge Bob	Entertainment Tonight	Scrubs	Everwood		Ally McBeal		For Love Or Money 1		Newswatch Now	Cerge For Truth		
IBC 13		Lifestyle		EZ Shop		Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Lifestyle		On Air Tambayan		Direk	Junior Reyes Report	Bestfriends	Celebrity Single	Entrepinoy	IBC News Tonite	Breaking Barriers	
Solar		Wwe Heat		WWE Confidential		Fantastic Four	Static Shock	Godzilla	Incredible Hulk	Invisible Man		Wwe Raw				Wwe Heat		WWE Confidential	
Nickelodeon	Dora, The Explorer	Little Bear	Blues Clues	SpongeBob SquarePants	All That	Are You Afraid of the Dark?	100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd	The Amanda Show	The Adventures Of Jimmy Neutron	Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	As Told By Ginger	Nick Mix		100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd				Rugrats
MYX		Urban MYX		Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Mellow MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	Urban MYX	MYX Live!		My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX	Mellow MYX
ETC		Knock First	JKX	The Today Show		Starting Over		NBC Nightly News		Will & Grace	Good Morning Miami	Who Wants To Marry My Dad		Last Comic Standing		Tonight Show With Jay Leno		Elimidate	Change of Heart
Cinema One		Hari Ng Selda				Isang Linggong Pag-ibig				Hostage			Persona	Ilaban Mo Bayan Ko (9:15 PM)				La Vida Rosa	
Studio 23								Batman Animated Series	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Wazzup Wazzup	Mr. Bean	C.S.I.	Angel			News Central	The Oprah Winfrey Show		Yes Dear
AXN		Fear Factor		Alias		Ripley's Believe It or Not		Samurai X	Samurai X	Bassmaster		The Amazing Race		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation		Fear Factor		Alias	
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		Hollywood Squares/ American Idol 4 2hr Special	Home Improvement	Ally McBeal		The Simpsons	The Drew Carey Show	Star News Asia	Friends	Ed/ American Idol 4 2hr Special		Philly		Third Watch		Friends	Ed
CNN				Business International		Larry King Live		World News	World Sport	Business International		World News Asia		World News		World News Asia		World News	World Sport
National Geographic	On Assignment	Passport		Taboo		Extreme Latitude	Revolutionary Rhythms	The Snake Wranglers	Croc Chronicles With Dr Brady Barr	Wild		About Asia		National Geographic Specials		Passport		Taboo	
Solar Sports		Copenhagen Masters MxdD Final		GWS ep.4-2005	WB World Grand Prix. Brazil vs. Italy				The Next Gen. Hardcourt '05 SFinals				NBA TV Daily	NBA Game Seattle @ Sacramento					NBA Inside Stuff
Lifestyle Network	Country Style	Interiors By Design	Decorating With Style	Decorating Cents	Molto Mario	Sweet Dreams	30 Minute Meals	Bill Boggs Corner	Unwrapped	Wolfgang Puck's	E! Entertainment Special			Lifestyle		Style Weekend	Nigella Bites	Breathing Room	Genuine Article
HBO			Without Warning			Frances				Anger Management (7:15 PM)				The Frighteners				The Ring (10:50PM)	
Star Movies	Rocky IV			The Deep End			Levity (5:45 PM)				Air Strike (7:25 PM)			Rats			Conan The Barbarian		
Cartoon Network	Scooby-Doo Show	The All New Popeye Show		Tom & Jerry Show	Baby Looney Tunes	Sylvester & Tweety Mysteries	Police Academy	He-Man & The Masters Of The Universe	Teen Titans	Yu-Gi-Oh!	Gundam Seed	The Looney Tunes Show		The Powerpuff Girls	Codename: Kids Next Door	Mr. T	Josie And The Pussycats	Boomerang - Boomeraction	Yu-Gi-Oh!
ESPN			Atlantic Coast Conf. Nrth Carolina vs. Virginia				NFL's Greatest Game			Super Bowl XXVI Highlights Redskins vs. Bills	Goals!	Sportscenter Taiwan	Pool/Snooker Mosconi Cup '04		Big 10 Conf. Basketball-Illinois vs. Michigan St.				Sportscenter Asia
Disney Channel	Kim Possible	Totally Spies	Lizzie Mcguire	Even Stevens	That's So Raven	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	The Legend Of Tarzan	Lilo & Stitch/Unlalkative Bunny	America's Funniest Home Video	Wonderful World Of Disney			My Wife And Kids	That's So Raven	According To Jim	America's Funniest Home Video	Wonderful World Of Disney	
Cinemax				Pumpkin (4:15 PM)				Water's Edge (6:15 PM)				Cops And Robbersons			Subterano (9:35 PM)			Green Dragon (11:10PM)	
Hallmark Channel	Mad About You	Mr. Saint Nick				Play With Me Sesame	Sesame Street		Bewitched	Agency II		Changi		Kidnapped: The Elizabeth Smart Story			Strong Medicine (10:35PM)		Agency II (11:25PM)
Discovery Channel		Science Mysteries		Science Frontiers		Wild Science		Ultimate Discovery						Wild Science		Ultimate Discovery		Hour Asia	
MTV Philippines		MTV Dyes		Non-Stop Hits		Non-Stop Hits		MTV Get Spotted	MTV Loveline			MTV Rock'd	Whatever Things	TRL		Room Raiders	One Bad Trip	VH1 Hits/ Video Collection	
Sports Plus			Superbowl Stories				Buick Invitational Highlights		You've Got to See This	NBA Game Phoenix @ Memphis					Bikini Destination	WTA Australia-Final			Inside the PGA
EWTN	Council Of Faith	Angelus (3:15 PM)	Refurbishing The Soul	The Donut Man	Faith Factory	The Holy Rosary With Mother Angelica and the Nuns Of Our Lady Of The Angels Monastery	Saints For The Third Millenium	The Virtues	EWTN Gallery	Mother Angelica Live Classics		One In Their Hearts	Pope Pius XII	Daily Mass		Angelus (10:15PM)	St. Catherine Of Sienna	Our Father's Plan	

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INQ TV

Former rivals Sony, BMG will try to be one 'as harmoniously as possible'

By Marinel R. Cruz

MUSIC giants Sony and BMG Music Entertainment, until recently fierce competitors, will try to gel and work as one company "as harmoniously as possible," according to its new managing director, Rudy Tee.

The recent merging of Sony Music Philippines and BMG Pilipinas was the result of last year's union between the Japanese Sony and German Bertelsmann Music Group, the second and fifth biggest record companies worldwide, respectively.

Tee, who has been managing director of BMG Pilipinas Inc. for 10 years now, was appointed head of Sony-BMG last Jan. 5 in a memorandum by Richard Denekamp, regional head of Sony-BMG Music Entertainment.

Sony-BMG in Asia is presently based in Hong Kong.

"I am confident that once the new Sony-BMG company is legally established [in the Philippines], Rudy will bring all of his experience and passion to bear in ensuring it remains the preeminent record company in the Philippines," Denekamp said in his memo.

Although he has not occupied his Sony-BMG office yet, Tee said he feels "humbled and pressured to be handling two major labels."

Tee said he is looking forward to the challenge. "I'm taking things as they come one day at a time," he told INQUIRER Entertainment.

Tee is expecting to assume his post in March this year.

Tee is also currently vice chair of the IFPI-associated Pari (Philippine Association of the Record Industry) and serves on the Board of the Filipino Society of Composers and Publishers. IFPI is the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry.

The merging of Sony and BMG was a result of the "global crisis in the music industry," according to the company's website, www.sonybmg.com.

"We have all seen a massive decline in sales while costs have risen and CD prices have fallen," the website states. "By combining operations, and a program of cost savings, Sony-BMG will be able to sustain and increase our investment in artists worldwide and in multiple genres, instead of continuing on our current course of streamlining and cutting costs in response to the challenging market conditions."

The Sony-BMG union created the world's second largest record label, controlling 25.2 percent of the global music market, only slightly behind Universal Records' 25.9 percent share.

The merged company is now based in New York.

The merger now leaves the music industry with just four major labels: Sony-BMG, Universal Music Group, WEA and EMI.

TEE. "Humbled and pressured"

Faith, Joseph Aldana and Mista Blaze in albums from indie producer

XAX MUSIC Entertainment, now in its fourth year as an independent record producer, has just released new albums by the last three artists to join its talent pool: Faith, Joseph Aldana and Mista Blaze.

Faith, previously known as Carmela Cuneta, is the voice behind the hit song "Di Ko Na Kaya," from the soundtrack of "Endless Love 2."

The 26-year-old singer's career started when she won first runner-up in the 1997 Metropop Festival. She then became a featured performer in the bar lounges of five-star hotels such as Dusit, Manila Diamond and Shangri-la.

Faith's album of 10 love songs for XAX is self-titled. The two carrier singles are "Love Me Again," a remake of the Patti Austin hit; and "Magbalik Ka," written by Ezra Dave Maling, with music composed by Ayumi Nishimura, and with Elmer Blancaflor as arranger.

Joseph Aldana, the other half of Rockstar 2, is back as a solo act. His album, simply titled "Joseph Aldana," consists of two English and 10 Tagalog numbers.

It also has two-carrier singles—"Single Smile," composed and arranged by Elmer Blancaflor, with lyrics by Romer Timbreza; and "Di Na Mawawala," composed by Rannie Ilag and also arranged by Elmer Blancaflor.

Hip-hop and rap artist Mista Blaze's debut album is titled "First Spark."

Born to a half-Spanish father and a half-American mother from Iloilo City, Mista Blaze—Adlai Stevenson Harbort Gurrea in real life—spent most of his childhood in Iloilo and later joined his mother in Sacramento, California.

After high school, he came back to the Philippines, where he finished his schooling. He formed the group West Side Thugs.

When this group did not click, he put together Ill (short for Ilongo) Pride, which recorded and released an underground album that reportedly managed to sell 2,000 copies sans promotion.

He goes solo for "First Spark," writing all 16 cuts.

The album was made under the strict supervision of multi-awarded deejay/music video director and producer Arbie Won.

All three new releases from XAX are now available in major record shops.

Be the new Claudine, Piolo, Jericho or Kristine

NOW on its 13th year, ABS-CBN Star Magic has been home to big name stars such as Claudine Barretto, Piolo Pascual, Kristine Hermosa, Jericho Rosales, Heart Evangelista, Diether Ocampo, Bea Alonzo, John Lloyd Cruz and many more.

In 2005, ABS-CBN Star Magic opens its doors to aspiring singers.

Young men and women, ages 14 to 18 years old who believe they have the talent for singing should come over to ABS-CBN Studio 11 (4th floor, Talent Center Building, through the Audience Entrance through the Eugenio Lopez Drive) on Feb. 9, 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Bring your resumé, one 3R close-up photo and a minus-one CD or cassette.

This is not for any contest so do not pass up this rare opportunity as you might be part of the ABS-CBN Star Magic family.

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Loviscol®
100 mg/5 mL Pediatric Syrup
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Available in drops for infants, syrup for children, capsules and suspension for adults.
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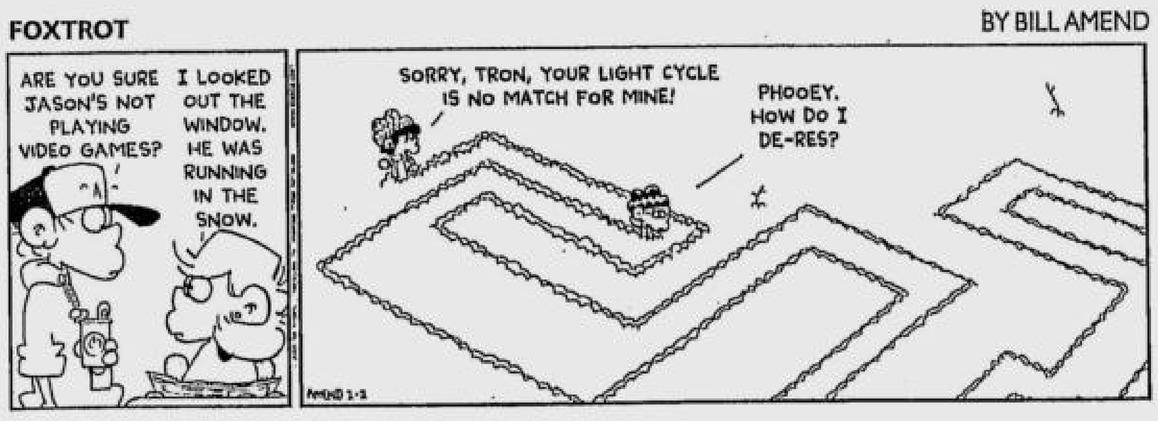
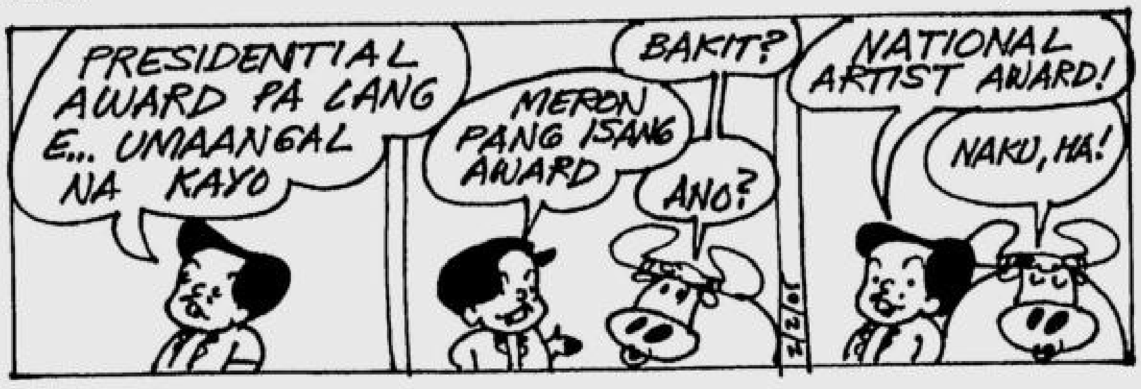

ARE YOU SURE JASON'S NOT PLAYING VIDEO GAMES?
I LOOKED OUT THE WINDOW. HE WAS RUNNING IN THE SNOW.
SORRY, TRON, YOUR LIGHT CYCLE IS NO MATCH FOR MINE!
PHOOEY. HOW DO I DE-RES?
AMEND 2-2

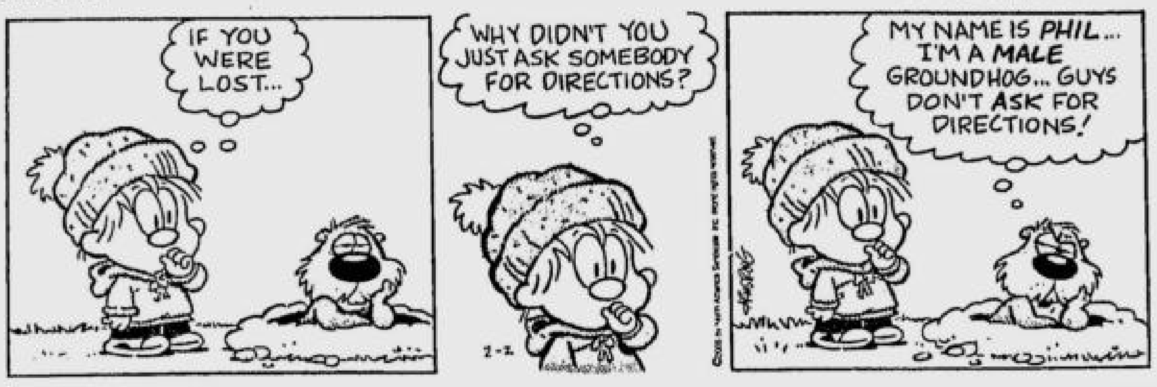
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


PRESIDENTIAL AWARD PA LANG E... UMAANGAL NA KAYO
MERON PANG ISANG AWARD
BAKIT?
ANO?
NATIONAL ARTIST AWARD!
NAKU, HA!

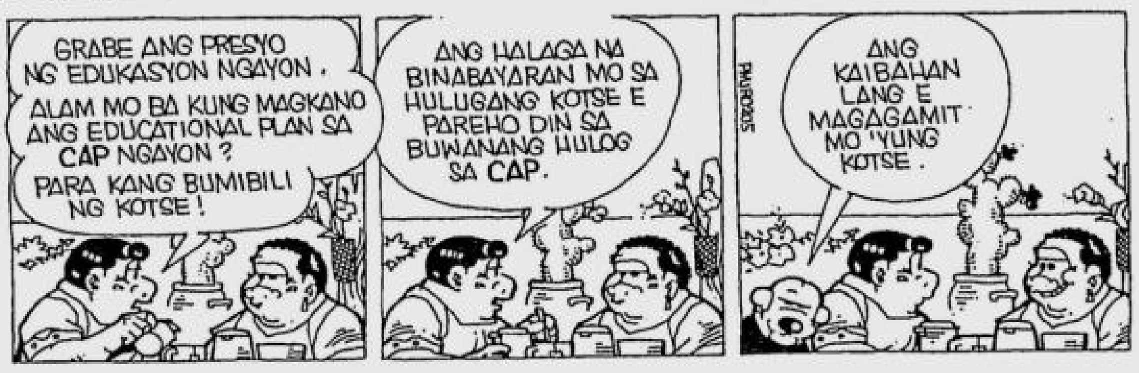
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


IF YOU WERE LOST...
WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST ASK SOMEBODY FOR DIRECTIONS?
MY NAME IS PHIL... I'M A MALE GROUNDHOG... GUYS DON'T ASK FOR DIRECTIONS!
2-2

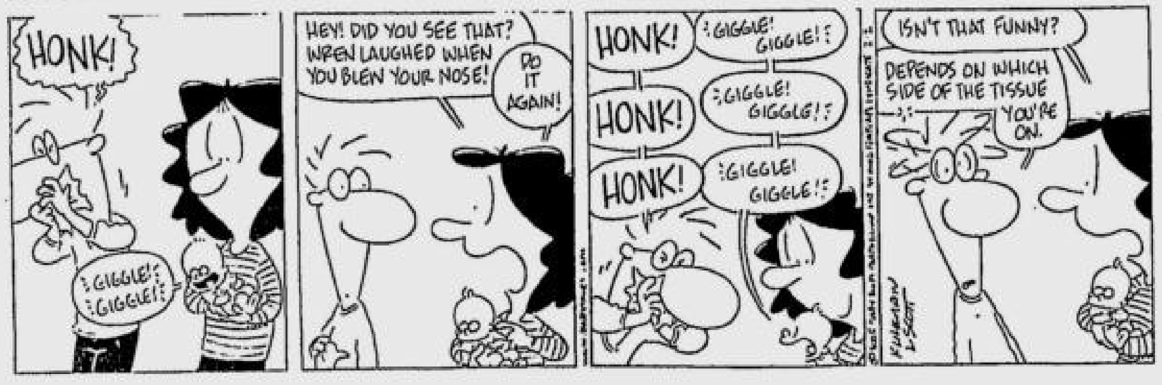
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


GRABE ANG PRESYO NG EDUKASYON NGAYON.
ALAM MO BA KUNG MAGKANO ANG EDUCATIONAL PLAN SA CAP NGAYON ?
PARA KANG BUMIBILI NG KOTSE!
ANG HALAGA NA BINABAYARAN MO SA HULUGANG KOTSE E PAREHO DIN SA BUWANANG HULOG SA CAP.
ANG KAIBAHAN LANG E MAGAGAMIT MO 'YUNG KOTSE.

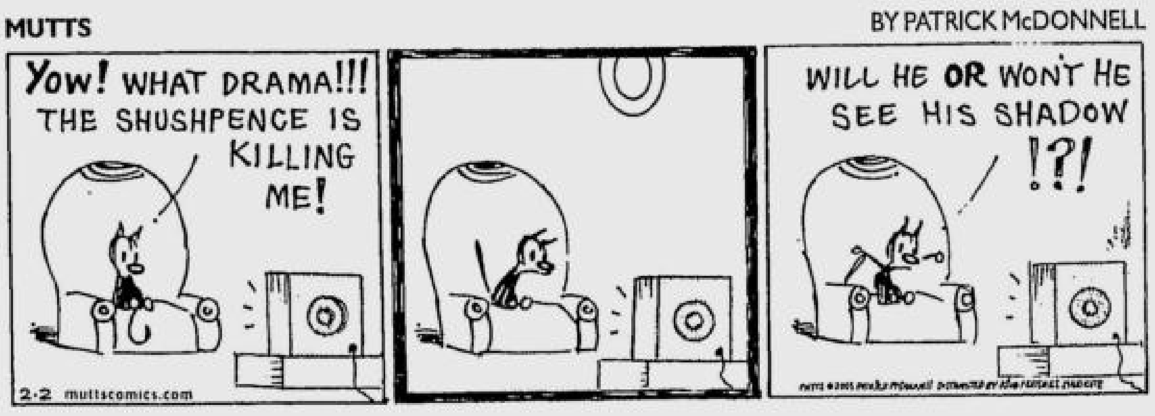
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


HONK!
GIGGLE! GIGGLE!
HEY! DID YOU SEE THAT? WREN LAUGHED WHEN YOU BLEW YOUR NOSE!
DO IT AGAIN!
HONK!
GIGGLE! GIGGLE!
HONK!
GIGGLE! GIGGLE!
HONK!
GIGGLE! GIGGLE!
ISN'T THAT FUNNY?
DEPENDS ON WHICH SIDE OF THE TISSUE YOU'RE ON.

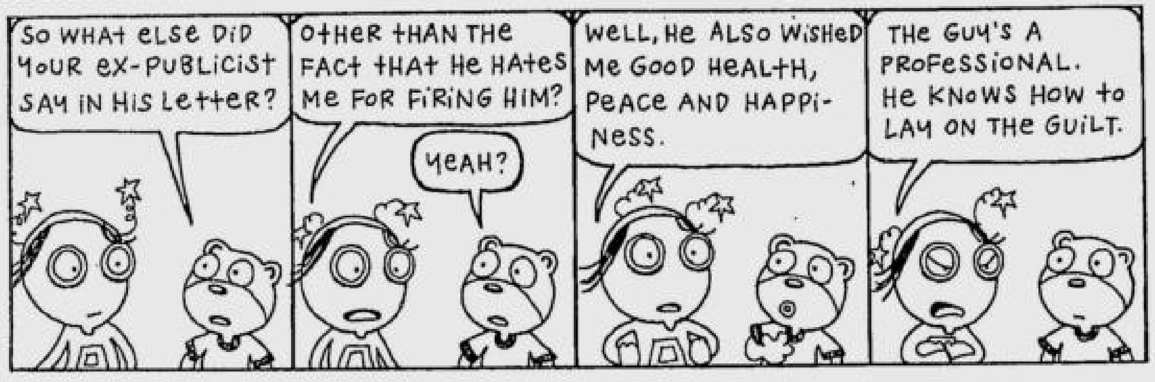
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


YOW! WHAT DRAMA!!! THE SHUSHPENCE IS KILLING ME!
WILL HE OR WON'T HE SEE HIS SHADOW !?!
2-2 muttscomics.com

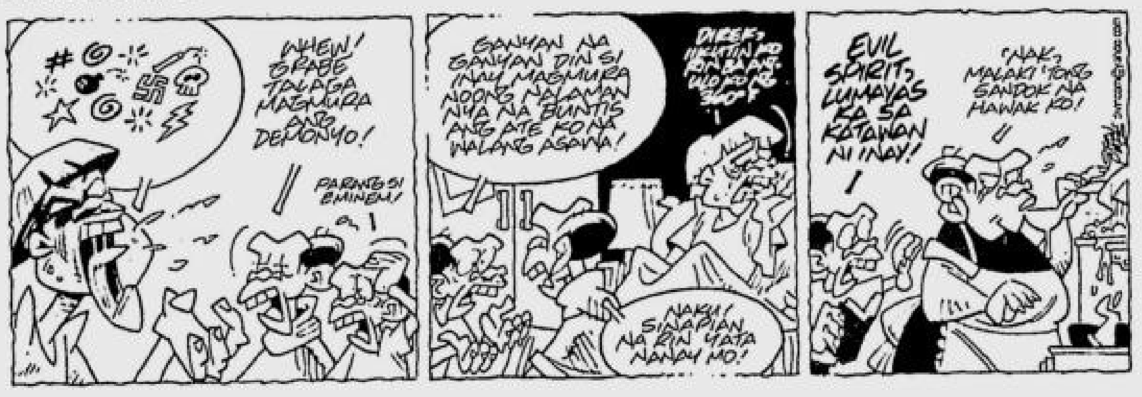
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


SO WHAT ELSE DID YOUR EX-PUBLICIST SAY IN HIS LETTER?
OTHER THAN THE FACT THAT HE HATES ME FOR FIRING HIM?
YEAH?
WELL, HE ALSO WISHED ME GOOD HEALTH, PEACE AND HAPPINESS.
THE GUY'S A PROFESSIONAL. HE KNOWS HOW TO LAY ON THE GUILT.

DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


WHEW! GRABE TALAGA MAGMURA ANG DEMONYO!
PARANG SI EMINEM!
GANYAN NA GANYAN DIN SI INAY MAGMURA NOONG MALAMAN NIYA NA BUNTIS ANG ATE KO NA WALANG ASAWA!
NAKU! SINAPIAN NA RIN YATA NANAY MO!
EVIL SPIRIT, LUMAYAS KA SA KATAWAN NI INAY!
'NAK, MALAKI 'TONG SANDOK NA HAWAK KO!

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're an excellent worker on your own. You have a sophisticated sense of humor. You feel strongly about your cultural beginnings and your nationality. You like to be detached, objective and masterful, and your controlled manner demonstrates this. This year, partnerships and close friendships need your attention and focus.
Birthdate of: Christie Brinkley, model; Michael T. Weiss, actor; Graham Nash, singer.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Your friendships with others, particularly pals, acquaintances, groups and organizations, will improve beautifully in the next few weeks.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Venus moves to the top of your chart, causing people to look at you with admiration. Your relations with bosses, parents and VIPs will improve beautifully in the next two to three weeks.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Be on the lookout for opportunities to travel, or to improve your reputation at school or in the publishing game. things really favor you in these areas!

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): A planetary shift today can bring you gifts and goodies in the next 4 to 6 weeks. Inheritances, bonuses, refunds for your partner are just some of the ways you can benefit.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Fair Venus moves opposite your sign today. This gives you an opportunity to make a sweet impression on others. Suddenly, people are especially cooperative. (Good! This lasts for six weeks.)

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): All your relationships with co-workers and people related to your job will improve now and in the month ahead. Expect praise and possibly a raise!

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You have a marvelous, fun-filled time ahead of you. As Venus shifts signs today, it ushers in opportunities for love, romance and parties, plus increased earnings in the arts and the hospitality industry.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Go ahead with plans to beautify or enhance your home in any way. Your relations with family members definitely improve during the next six weeks.

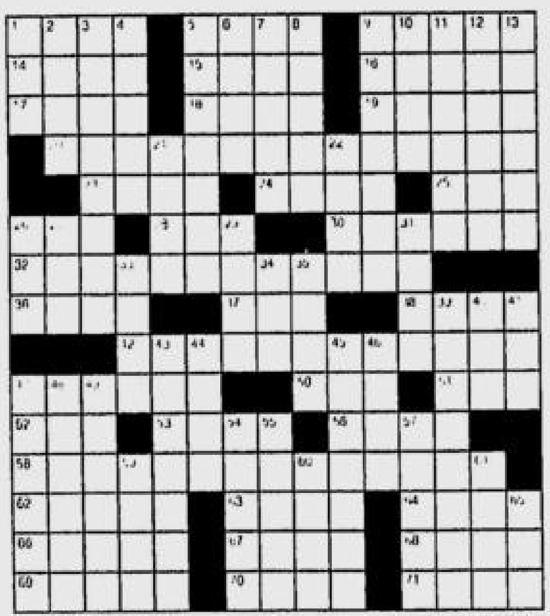
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Capitalize on opportunities to improve your relations with siblings, neighbors and friends now. In the month ahead, you'll notice people like you more.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Lucky you! In the next four to six weeks, you will earn more money. (You also spend money on beautiful things and on loved ones.)

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18) Today Venus moves into your sign, joining Mercury, the Sun and Neptune. There's a lot happening in Aquarius! This empowers you and attracts opportunities and people to you.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Be open to ways of exploring your hidden spiritual reality. You can do this publicly or privately. This month is an opportunity for you to grow.

DAILY CROSSWORD

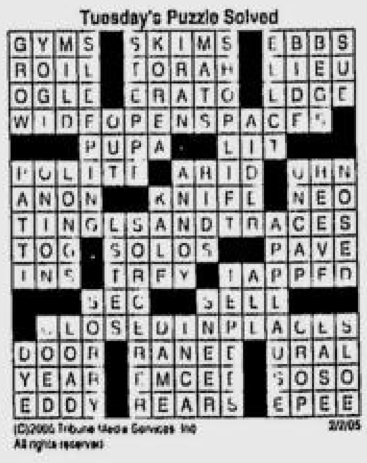


By Philip J. Anderson
Portland, OR
2/2/05

ACROSS
1 Sunscreen ingredient
5 Guitar adjuncts, briefly
9 Norwegian dramatist
14 Vivacity
15 Fall guy
16 Drain cover
17 Dictator Idi
18 Nagy of Hungary
19 Cranny
20 Broadcast journalist made dinner?
23 Actress Ward
24 Belgrade man
25 Wind dir.
26 PFC's entertainment
28 Bonus NFL periods
30 Slurred
32 Literary lion roared?
36 Pot sweetener
37 Big letters in Detroit
38 Tours to be
42 Pop singer bragged?
47 Share billing
50 Sellout letters
51 Make a choice
52 False front
53 Drill parts
56 Smart one
58 Musician wanted to know?
62 Fortune's deck
63 Carrier to Israel
64 Disagreeable responsibility
66 First name of a plane
67 Major ending?
68 Dole opposite
69 Fill an empty flat
70 Conks out
71 Italian noble family

DOWN
1 Green shade
2 __ meter
3 Parachutes
4 Astronomer Cannon
5 Stir up
6 NYC cultural attraction
7 City on the Seine
8 One cubic meter
9 Dishonorable
10 Vivacity
11 Taken down like a QB
12 Sweet-smelling gas
13 Lacked
21 Untidy person
22 Ship's company
26 NATO member
27 __ Jose, CA
29 Disparaging remark
31 Logical starter?
33 For fear that
34 Place
35 Wise birds?
39 Opinion value?
40 Elected off.
41 NYC summer hrs.
43 Environment
44 Border lake
45 Baby beds
46 Kind of model
47 Net flinger
48 Gasoline rating
49 Unsaturated alcohol
54 Coarse wool
55 Conductor Sir Georg
57 Uneven
59 Small rodent
60 "Six Feet Under" character
61 Twosome
65 Fr. holy woman

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved



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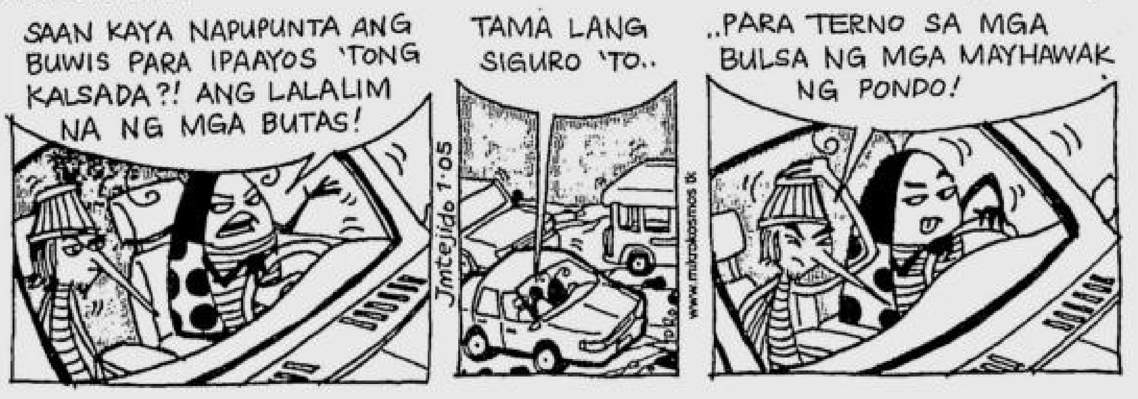
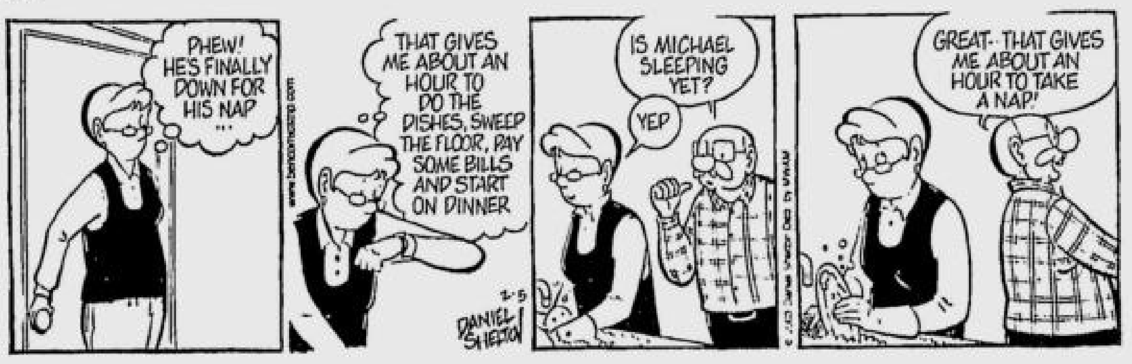
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


SAAN KAYA NAPUPUNTA ANG BUWIS PARA IPAAYOS 'TONG KALSADA?! ANG LALALIM NA NG MGA BUTAS!
TAMA LANG SIGURO 'TO..
..PARA TERNO SA MGA BULSA NG MGA MAYHAWAK NG PONDO!
Jmtejido 1·05
www.mikrokosmos.tk

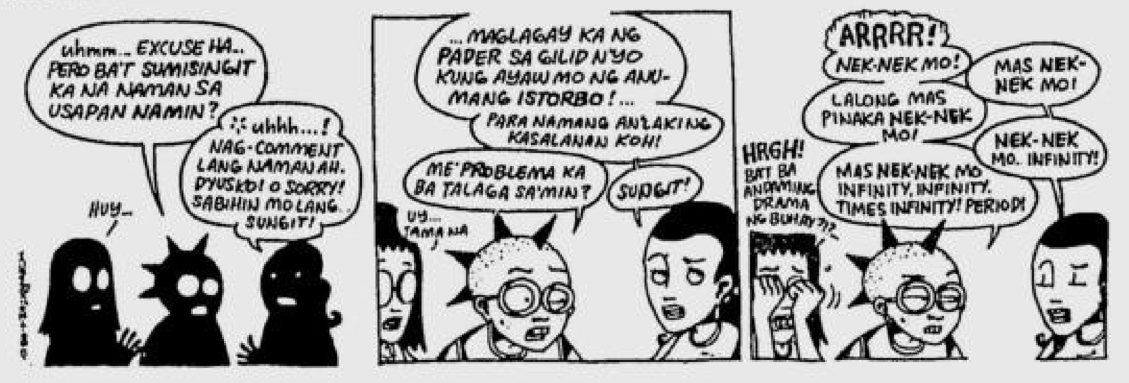
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


PHEW! HE'S FINALLY DOWN FOR HIS NAP ...
THAT GIVES ME ABOUT AN HOUR TO DO THE DISHES, SWEEP THE FLOOR, PAY SOME BILLS AND START ON DINNER
IS MICHAEL SLEEPING YET?
YEP
GREAT- THAT GIVES ME ABOUT AN HOUR TO TAKE A NAP!
2-5
DANIEL SHELTON

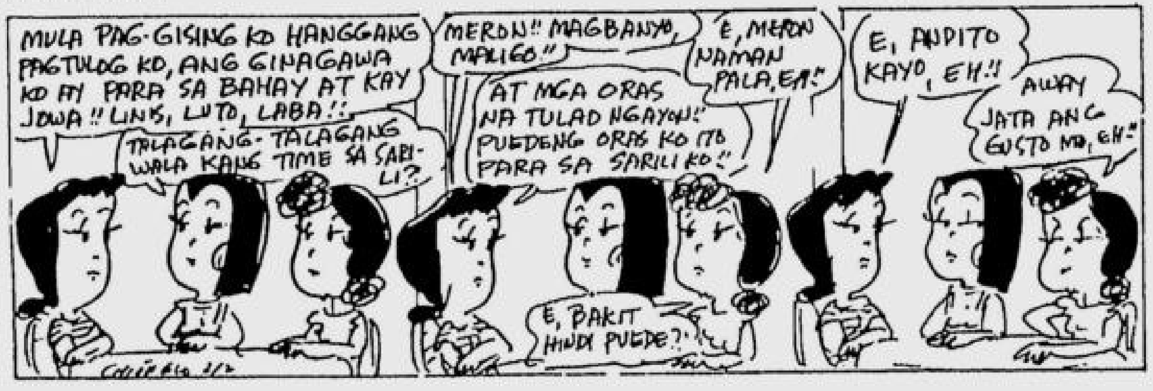
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


uhmm... EXCUSE HA.. PERO BA'T SUMISINGIT KA NA NAMAN SA USAPAN NAMIN?
uhhh...!
NAG-COMMENT LANG NAMAN AH. DYUSKO! O SORRY! SABIHIN MO LANG. SUNGIT!
HUY..
...MAGLAGAY KA NG PADER SA GILID N'YO KUNG AYAW MO NG ANUMANG ISTORBO!...
PARA NAMANG ANLAKING KASALANAN KOH!
ME' PROBLEMA KA BA TALAGA SA'MIN?
SUNGIT!
UY... TAMA NA
ARRRR!
NEK-NEK MO!
MAS NEK-NEK MO!
LALONG MAS PINAKA NEK-NEK MO!
NEK-NEK MO.. INFINITY!
MAS NEK-NEK MO INFINITY, INFINITY. TIMES INFINITY! PERIOD!
HRGH!
BAT BA ANDAMING DRAMA NG BUHAY?!?

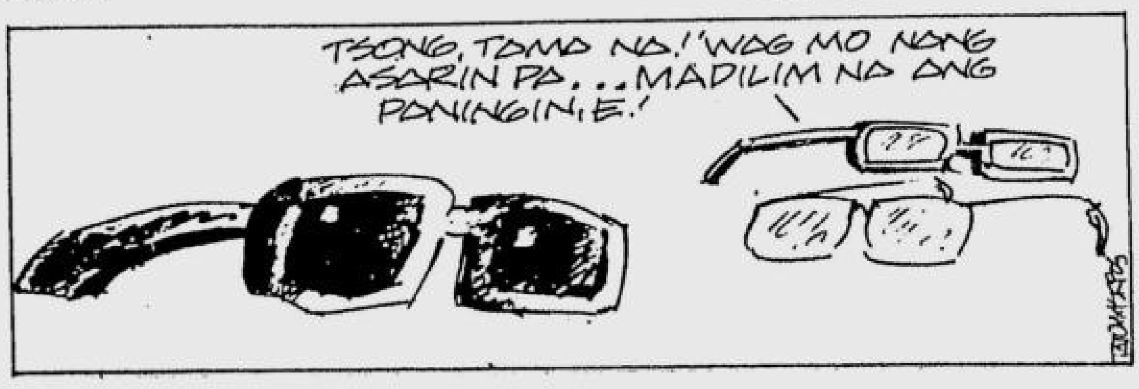
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

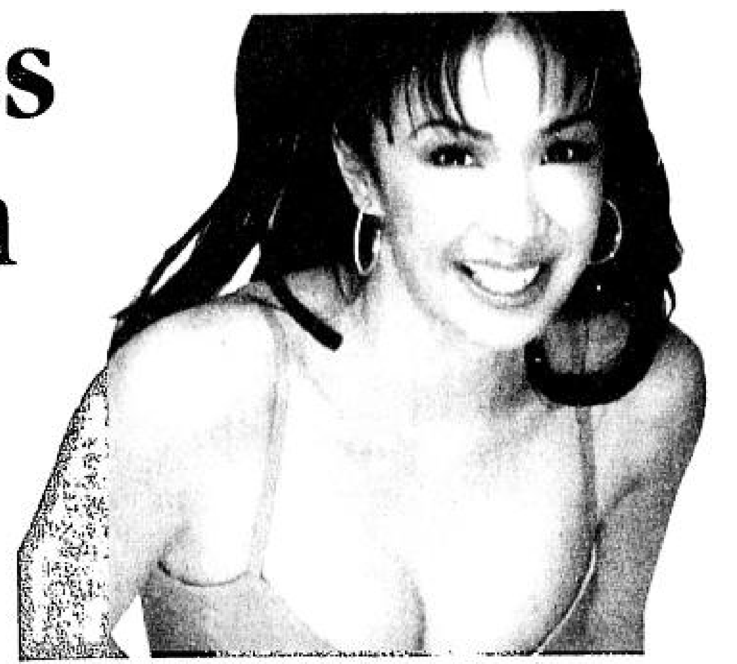

MULA PAG-GISING KO HANGGANG PAGTULOG KO, ANG GINAGAWA KO AY PARA SA BAHAY AT KAY JOWA!! LINIS, LUTO, LABA!!
TALAGANG-TALAGANG WALA KANG TIME SA SARILI?
MERON!! MAGBANYO, MALIGO!!
E, MERON NAMAN PALA, EH!
AT MGA ORAS NA TULAD NGAYON!! PUEDENG ORAS KO ITO PARA SA SARILI KO!!
E, BAKIT HINDI PUEDE?
E, ANDITO KAYO, EH!!
AWAY JATA ANG GUSTO MO, EH!

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


TSONG, TAMA NA! 'WAG MO NANG ASARIN PA... MADILIM NA ANG PANINGIN, E!

Funny mom Giselle celebrates 'An Early Valentine' at Westin


IN DEMAND. Giselle has shows here and abroad

SHOW TIME

THE FUNNY girl is at it again.

This time, Giselle Sanchez will give you an early Valentine treat as she sings and laughs her way on the Siete Pecados stage in a show that combines good old music with rib-tickling fun.

"An Early Valentine," on Wednesday, Feb. 9, will prove once more why Giselle is in demand in local shows as well as abroad. In fact, she is scheduled to perform in Saudi Arabia, Saipan, Guam, Hawaii and key cities in mainland US.

"I want to do all these while my daughter Lia is still young," says Giselle, referring to her daughter who turned 1 last October. "As of now, it's out of sight, out of mind for her. But when she turns two or three, she will surely start looking for me. I don't want the day to come when she'll resent the fact that her mother was always out working and was not there to take care of her. Given the chance, I'd like to bring her wherever I go."

Meanwhile, it's on with the fun, as "An Early Funny Valentine" gives you a love month to remember. The show is produced by RRCM Co. and M-1 Entertainment with 105.1 Crossover and The Westin Philippine Plaza as sponsors. 92.3 Joey is official radio station.

Valentine's Day itself at Siete Pecados features the Hyperbeat and Velocity playing high-energy, heart-thumping music, at P800++ inclusive of one standard drink and buffet pica-pica.

Tickets to "An Early Funny Valentine," P500 each, are available at The Westin Philippine Plaza. For inquiries, call 551-5555.

ARETHA & SOUL'D OUT

Judith Banal, Aretha & Soul'd Out, Richard Merk & Friends

MERK'S offers a lovely way of celebrating the love month of February with its blend of entertainment and good food.

Internationally recognized artist Judith Banal takes center stage on Mondays., Feb. 7, 21 and 28. Tuesdays feature Route 70 with its selection of retro tunes.

Wednesdays sparkle with the perennial favorite Merk & Friends in their special Wednesday jazz festival. Richard Merk, Sandra Lim and Eddi Katindig liven up the midweek like no one else can.

Jam with Acoustic Jive on Thursdays, Feb. 3, 17 and 24. On Feb. 10, also a Thursday, Merk's gives way to new and brilliant artist Mishka Adams.

Pop band Forte dazzles the audience every Friday. The Cruzin Band takes center stage on Feb. 5 and 19, both Saturdays.

February also marks the return of Aretha and the Soul'd Out band after their stint in Okinawa. Their performances are on Feb. 12, 13 and 26.

Valentine's Day features Love, Soul and Laughter at Merk's with Aretha and the Soul'd Out band and Bernie Uy.

Multi-instrumentalist Romy Posadas plays during Happy Hour from Monday to Wednesday, while guitar girl Mae is on every Thursday and Saturday and the Dawn on Fridays.

Music and cuisine go hand in hand at Merk's, which has also become known for its fine country cuisine, courtesy of the famed and respected Bistro Remedios kitchen.

Merk's Bar Bistro is at Level 3 of Greenbelt 3 at the Ayala Center, Makati City. Visit its website at www.merksbarbistro.com for more bar bistro news. Music lovers can e-mail Merk's at mail@merksbarbistro.com.

For more information, call 757-4720 and 757-4721. For daily gig skeds, text ctc gig merks and send to 2333 (Globe) and 225 (Smart).

RICHARD MERK

MISHKA ADAMS

ROUTE 70

Grounded wannabe opens Spin City

From page A2-8

Nescafe Ministry of Sound Global Tour DJ Finals in Acapulco, Mexico, where he landed second place. When he got back to the Philippines, he started spinning for bars.

Jessie is now resident "*supremo*" of Peligro Bar in Makati where he has been playing Saturday nights since February 2004.

"Peligro is home to me and I will be playing there as long as I can," Jessie wrote in an e-mail to INQUIRER Entertainment.

First Scratch

There has never been any formal lessons on DJ-ing in the Philippines. DJ schools are found mostly in the US, UK and Japan. With this thought in mind, Jessie decided to share his passion for music and DJ-ing and opted to open a school for DJ wannabes.

Jessie will be using the First Scratch technology, a special program where a DJ can play almost any form of digital music from a computer using an analog source like a turntable. It converts the sound into a visual wall where the track and the beat can be seen.

"From there, if you can see what you're learning and hear it at the same time, it's much faster than actually just hearing it," says Jessie.

Only five students per teacher can be taught at a time. Jessie says anybody can join as long as the student has the interest and dedication to learn.

"We set the number of students at five to guarantee that they all learn," explains Lex Ledesma, admissions director of CIE. "We can always make it more, but it's hard to see if one person in the class isn't learning. We want to make sure that they really get to learn how to DJ. At least the basics."

World's No. 5

The students need not have their own equipment. They can practice as much as they want in the practice studios in Alabang and San Juan.

Lending support during the launching was Ferry Corsten, listed on UK's 2004 DJ Magazine as No. 5 DJ in the world.

"I actually should not be here because I'm actually going to make a lot of competition for myself," Corsten said in jest during the launch, drawing laughter from the crowd.

Corsten said had been interested in music since he was 9. At 11, he took to washing his neighbors' cars just so he could buy his first records.

He started DJ-ing at 15 when he would spin at school parties. He said he actually thought of making DJ mixes and selling them. Word got around about his talent when friends who heard his mixes told friends of friends and so on.

"I never really wanted to be a DJ," he said. "It was all a hobby. I really wanted to be a producer which I am now, but with the success of these records all of a sudden, I was really able to train. I'd say I'm doing OK."

Bedroom lessons

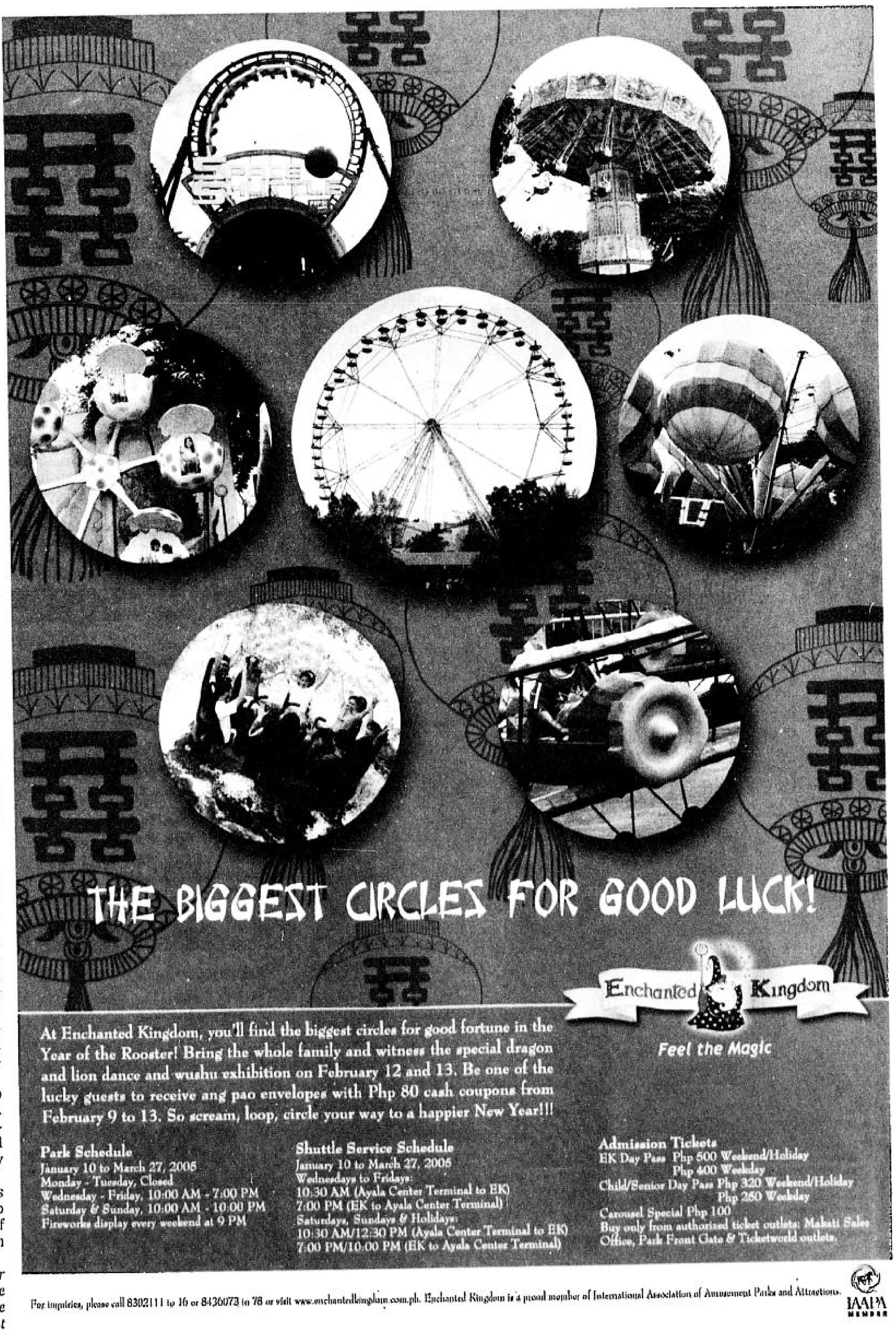
Corsten said Jessie's school for DJs would give wannabes a chance to learn the art of it formally.

"Traditional methods are usually instructions from friends or just trying to figure out how to play on your own," Corsten said. "From there you can only learn so much, so basically you end up figuring things out by yourself and sometimes people get bored doing this.

"Most people still learn to do it like me—in their bedrooms. And doing it formally will somewhat really ease the pain and hardship of figuring it out all by yourself."

DJ-ing and now sharing his knowledge about it, Jessie Cuaco just might make his dream of world domination—at least in the DJ world—come true.

Jessie will be holding classes for four hours every Sunday on the CIE campus at the RCBC Tower. Fee is P5,000. E-mail Jessie at suacs@hot7mail.com.



At Enchanted Kingdom, you'll find the biggest circles for good fortune in the Year of the Rooster! Bring the whole family and witness the special dragon and lion dance and wushu exhibition on February 12 and 13. Be one of the lucky guests to receive ang pao envelopes with Php 80 cash coupons from February 9 to 13. So scream, loop, circle your way to a happier New Year!!!

Park Schedule
January 10 to March 27, 2005
Monday - Tuesday, Closed
Wednesday - Friday, 10:00 AM - 7:00 PM
Saturday & Sunday, 10:00 AM - 10:00 PM
Fireworks display every weekend at 9 PM

Shuttle Service Schedule
January 10 to March 27, 2005
Wednesdays to Fridays:
10:30 AM (Ayala Center Terminal to EK)
7:00 PM (EK to Ayala Center Terminal)
Saturdays, Sundays & Holidays:
10:30 AM/12:30 PM (Ayala Center Terminal to EK)
7:00 PM/10:00 PM (EK to Ayala Center Terminal)

Admission Tickets
EK Day Pass Php 500 Weekend/Holiday
Php 400 Weekday
Child/Senior Day Pass Php 320 Weekend/Holiday
Php 250 Weekday
Carousel Special Php 100
Buy only from authorized ticket outlets: Makati Sales Office, Park Front Gate & Ticketworld outlets.

For inquiries, please call 8302111 to 16 or 8436073 to 78 or visit www.enchantedkingdom.com.ph. Enchanted Kingdom is a proud member of International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions.
IAAPA MEMBER

Makeovers on TV hit the spot

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

MAKEOVERS are a very big deal on TV these days, with a lot of shows showing people how to transform themselves and the places in which they live or work.

On Oprah Winfrey's show, ordinary people are taught how to energize and beautify their humdrum lives with the help of hair, make-up and couture experts.

Domiciles described as "the ugliest homes in America" are transformed into great living spaces that knock off neighbors' feet. And guest psychologists take care of straightening out the mess inside people's minds, hearts and psyches.

Oprah's weight-reduction shows are a particularly big hit with her viewers, since many people in the States could lose a pound or 10 (or 30)—not to mention the well-known fact that Ms Winfrey herself has waged some huge battles of the bulge in full view of her show's camera through the years.

Just last week, we caught a weight-reduction episode on "Oprah" that really hit the spot. Oprah's guest was a man who used to weigh over 800 lbs (!), and had lost 560 of those pounds so he could grace the show with his new, hunky body.

On "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy," five makeover "fairies" descend upon a bachelor's pad, and transform his entire life by teaching him new grooming and dressing tips, how to throw a mean cocktail party, and otherwise revitalize and redirect his life and career. To complete the makeover, they even redecorate his pad.

Similar home-transforming gambits are effected in different ways on other shows: On "Shabby Chic," viewers are taught how to find décor bargains in thrift shops and flea markets.

Numerous cooking shows like "Molto Mario," "East Meets West," "Iron Chef" and "30-Minute Meals" share chefs' gourmet tips in all sorts of regional and national cuisines.

"Starting Over" and Dr. Phil's program help viewers solve their psychological problems without having to pay astronomical fees to their shrinks. Carol Duvall's own how-to show focuses on crafts, and shows how industrious viewers can express themselves creatively, and make money at the same time.

"Planet Parent" discusses better and more enlightened ways of bringing up children. When it comes to pets, Animal planet has its share of how-to shows. And, for religious transformations, there's the Eternal Word Television Network.

That's the ticket: To be really effective and life-transforming, makeovers shouldn't be limited to the physical, but should include many different aspects of the human make-up. And so, to intelligently and realistically reinvent ourselves!

Bamboo Organ Festival

THE HISTORIC bamboo organ in Las Piñas has undergone major rehabilitation, from September 2003 to November 2004, by Diego Cera Organbuilders Inc.

MAKEOVERS/ A2-7

SeeMall!

AYALA CINEMAS THX

Movies/schedules may change without prior notice. For verification call 729-7777

ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	G1 GLORIETTA 1	G4 GLORIETTA 4		GB3 GREENBELT 3	ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU
THX 1 ELEKTRA	1 WHITE NOISE	1 WHITE NOISE	5 IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 1 ELEKTRA 1:30, 3:45, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30	1 ELEKTRA
2 MEET THE FOCKERS	2 ELEKTRA	2 ELEKTRA	6 MEET THE FOCKERS	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 2 MEET THE FOCKERS 1:00, 3:30, 6:00, 8:30, 11:00	2 MEET THE FOCKERS
3 WHITE NOISE		GUARANTEED SEATS THX 3 ELEKTRA 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 9:50	7 KUNG FU HUSTLE	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 OCEAN'S 12 1:30, 4:00, 6:30, 9:00, 11:30	3 SUPER BABIES: BABY GENIUSES 2
4 IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE	3 MEET THE FOCKERS	4 OCEAN'S 12		GUARANTEED SEATS 4 IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, 9:30, 11:30	4 KUNG FU HUSTLE
5 KUNG FU HUSTLE	4 KUNG FU HUSTLE			GUARANTEED SEATS 5 ELEKTRA 2:15, 4:30, 6:45, 9:00, 11:15	5

GB1 GREENBELT 1
1 ELEKTRA 12:45, 3:00, 5:15, 7:30, 9:45
2 MEET THE FOCKERS 11:30, 2:00, 4:30, 7:00, 9:30

At the Activity Center

GLORIETTA	ALABANG TOWN CENTER	AYALA CENTER CEBU
Photoworld Exhibit February 3-8, 2005	Valentine Serenade at Food Establishment February 12-14, 2005	Cebu Dental Society's 54th Medicine Week Society February 2, 2005

ENTERTAINMENT LIVE!

GREENBELT 3 PARK	GREENBELT 3 LOBBY
Valentine Show featuring Bituin Escalante February 12, 2004	Vera Wang Gown Exhibit February 17-28, 2005

Onstage
REPERTORY PHILIPPINES presents Busybody
at REP's GLOBE THEATER - Feb. 11,12,13,18,19,20,25,26,27

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Explore the arbitrary nature of secrecy, and the enduring passion, intuition and tenacity of the human heart in

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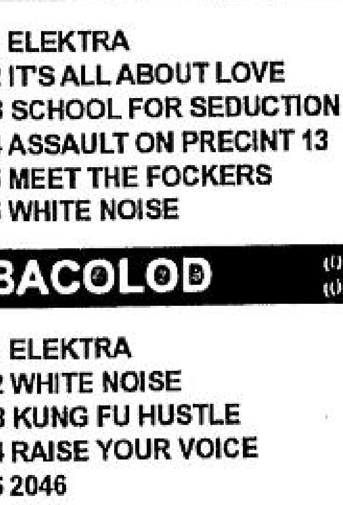

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Makeovers on TV hit the spot

From page A2-6

under Cealwyn Tagle. It entailed the disassembly and repair of cracked pipes, wind chests, keyboard, rollerboard, toeboards, replacement of organ motor, and final voicing and tuning of all pipes.

The rehabilitation was made possible through a grant from the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, facilitated by Sen. Manuel Villar Jr. and Rep. Cynthia Villar.

The Las Piñas bamboo organ was also officially declared as a National Cultural Treasure on Nov. 24, 2003.

With the rehabilitation completed, everything is set for the 2005 International Bamboo Organ Festival, which will be held in Las Piñas from Feb. 3 to 11.

Jerome and Kyla

AFTER interpreting the Metro Filmfest's best movie theme song winner, "Pagbigyan ang Puso," promising singing star Jerome John Hughes has recorded the theme of GMA Films' "Let the Love Begin" with Kyla.

He's also touring the malls to promote the movie's soundtrack album—on Feb. 5 at SM Southmall and Feb. 6 at SM Manila.

The album includes the music video produced by GMA Films, and six audio tracks—the Kyla and Jerome's duet version, Jerome's solo version, an instrumental version, a minus-one, and two new songs by the Shamrock group, "Ms Serious" and "Alipin."

OPENS TODAY
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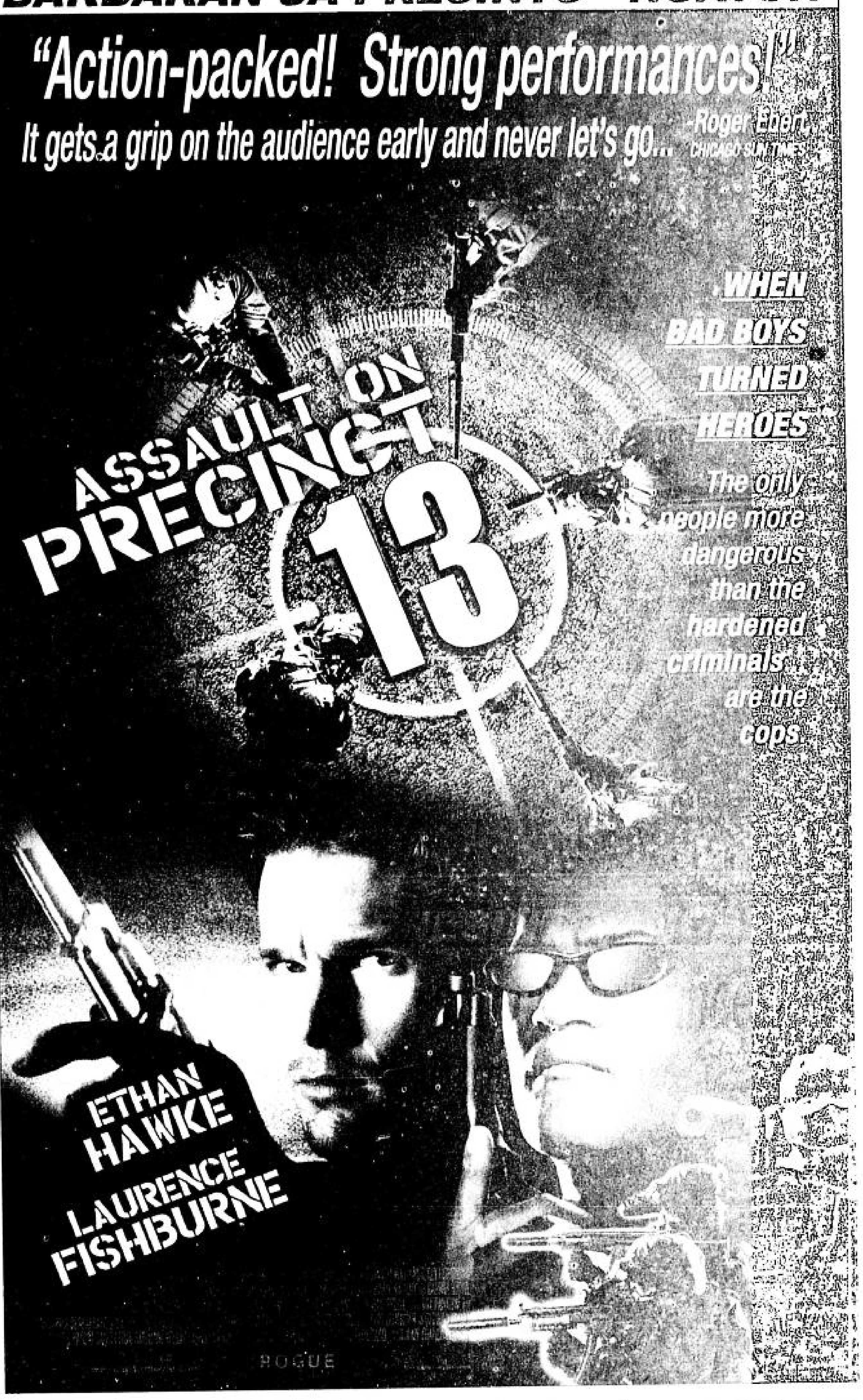
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The only people more dangerous than the hardened criminals are the cops
ETHAN HAWKE
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ROGUE

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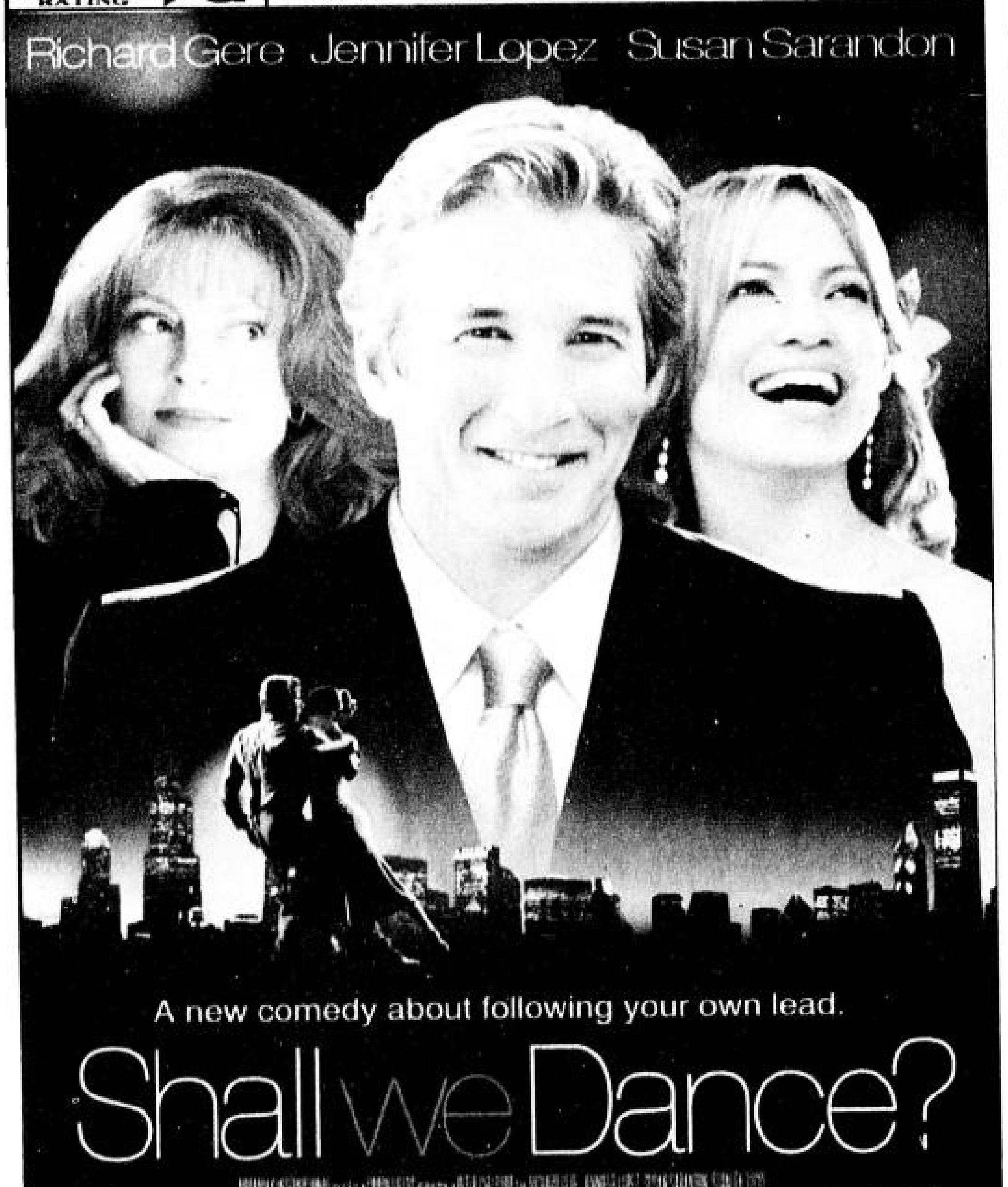
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ENTERTAINMENT

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Grounded wannabe opens Spin City

By Alexa H. Bacay

BEING grounded in one's bedroom because of low grades isn't that bad after all. At least not for Jessie Cuaco, for whom it became a venue for him to develop his passion for DJ work and even turn it into a business venture.

Having transferred to the Center for International Studies (CIE) from his former school where he had "quite a bit too much fun," Jessie says he has found what he wanted to do. At 21, he's opening a school for DJs called Spin City DJ Education, the first of its kind in the country.

The art of DJ-ing was introduced to him by friends of his older sister. The friends would drop by the Cuaco home with their DJ turntables and CD player. These fascinated Jessie, so he asked his parents to buy him his own equipment. They said no.

By saving money, Jessie was able to get himself his own set of equipment in New York while on vacation with his family. On the last day of the trip, he sneaked out and bought his gear. When hen he got back home, he surprised his mother with, "Mom, look what I bought!"

Surprised winner

"After buying the [equipment], I realized it was quite hard," he admits. "You have two records playing simultaneously and I was spinning [at the same time]. It's actually very technical."

Last week, he launched the DJ school at the RCBC Tower on Ayala Avenue, Makati.

At some point after he already had his own equipment, Jessie got bored and almost gave up learning to mix—until he began getting low grades, which made his parents ground him. With nothing better to do, and with the DJ-ing equipment just waiting to be used again, Jessie resumed learning the craft of mixing.

Upon getting the hang of his equipment and making music of his own, Jessie stumbled upon an online DJs' contest called the Ministry of Sound Online competition, which he joined. He was surprised, actually doubtful, to find out that he had won the contest, besting over 3,600 other entries.

Jessie was then asked to represent the country in the 2002

GROUNDED/ A2-5

FROM THE bedroom to the campus, Jessie Cuaco (right and with "world's No. 5 DJ" Ferry Corsten above) turned low grades into high marks

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Globe profit up 10% to ₱11.3B in '04

By Clarissa S. Batino

GLOBE Telecom Inc. yesterday announced a net profit of P11.3 billion for 2004, up by only 9.7 percent from P10.3 billion the previous year as the company failed to hook up more subscribers in the last quarter despite spending aggressively on marketing and promotion.

At the same time, the joint venture between Ayala Corp. and Singapore Telecom Ltd. yesterday offered to buy back Globe shares at P950 each, a P30 premium to yesterday's close of P920.

Subscribers to Globe and its other brand Touch Mobile reached 12.5 million in end-2004, up 2.3 million from the previous year.

But the quarterly figures showed that Globe posted a sharp growth slowdown during the fourth quarter when the company added a net of only 800,000 subscribers during a traditionally peak Christmas season.

The company lured in 1.4 million customers during the second quarter and 1.2 million in the third quarter of 2004.

Stock analysts are expecting market players to sell Globe shares today, which could drag down the company's stock price.

"The buyback offer is meant to avert a steep drop in share prices following its disappointing 2004 profit. (It) could prop up Globe's share price," said one analyst at a local brokerage house.

Globe said that if all shareholders would avail themselves of the buyback offer, the company could retire 9.3 million common shares equivalent to 6.67 percent of the outstanding capital stock.

The country's second-biggest phone company is also retiring 12 million treasury shares acquired in 2003 from Deutsche Telekom Asia. In effect, Globe is reducing the number of shares available in the market to boost earnings per share.

Globe president Gerardo Ablaza said he did not consider 2004 a bad year for Globe. He said the company achieved a lot in terms of reducing debt and realizing interest savings.

Globe's long-term debt dropped to P52 billion last year from P56 billion in 2003. Of the total, P9 billion are falling due this year, P20 billion spread out between 2006 and 2008 and the remaining P23 billion due in 2009.

"We are buying back shares to optimize Globe's capital structure. This is expected to enhance shareholder value as it will further improve what is already a strong return on equity and earnings per share performance," Ablaza said.

The company also increased its dividend to P20 per share from P18 the previous year.

Globe chief financial officer Delfin Gonzalez said the company's profit in the last quarter was stronger than the third quarter but lower than the year-ago figure.

Neda warns against ₱125 wage hike

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL Economic and Development Authority has thumbed down the proposal to implement a P125 across-the-board wage increase, arguing that it would be disadvantageous to the country's fragile economy.

The wage increase being sought by workers in the private sector is aimed at easing the burden caused by rising prices of basic commodities and services, but the Neda said that the adjustment would, ironically, only worsen the situation.

In a statement, the Neda said the proposed wage hike would only result in higher unemployment rate, higher inflation rate, and slow down the economy's gross domestic product (GDP) growth.

Scholastica Cororaton, head of the Neda's policy and planning division, said unemployment would rise by 3.55 percentage points if the wage increase would be implemented because companies in general could not afford it. The figure means that 1.1 million to 1.5 million more Filipinos will be jobless upon implementation of the wage adjustment, she said.

The Neda official also said that a wage increase was likely to cause inflation to hit as much as 7.9 percent and pull down GDP growth by a 3.87 percentage points.

NEDA/ B3

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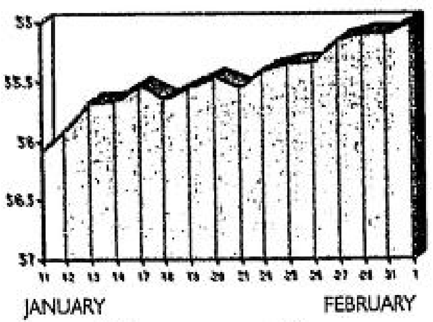

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As of 5 p.m., Feb. 1, 2005

GOLD: $ 420.80-423.30

per ounce Hong Kong, Feb. 1, 2005

STOCK MARKET

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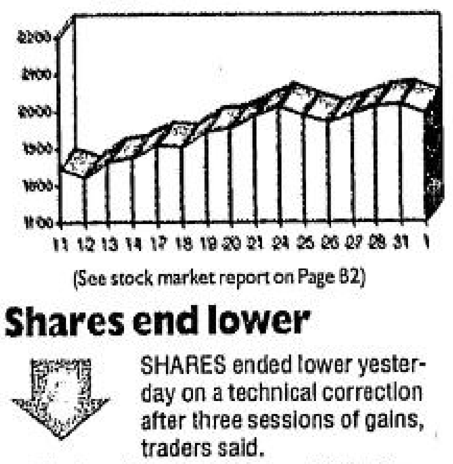


(See stock market report on Page B2)

Shares end lower

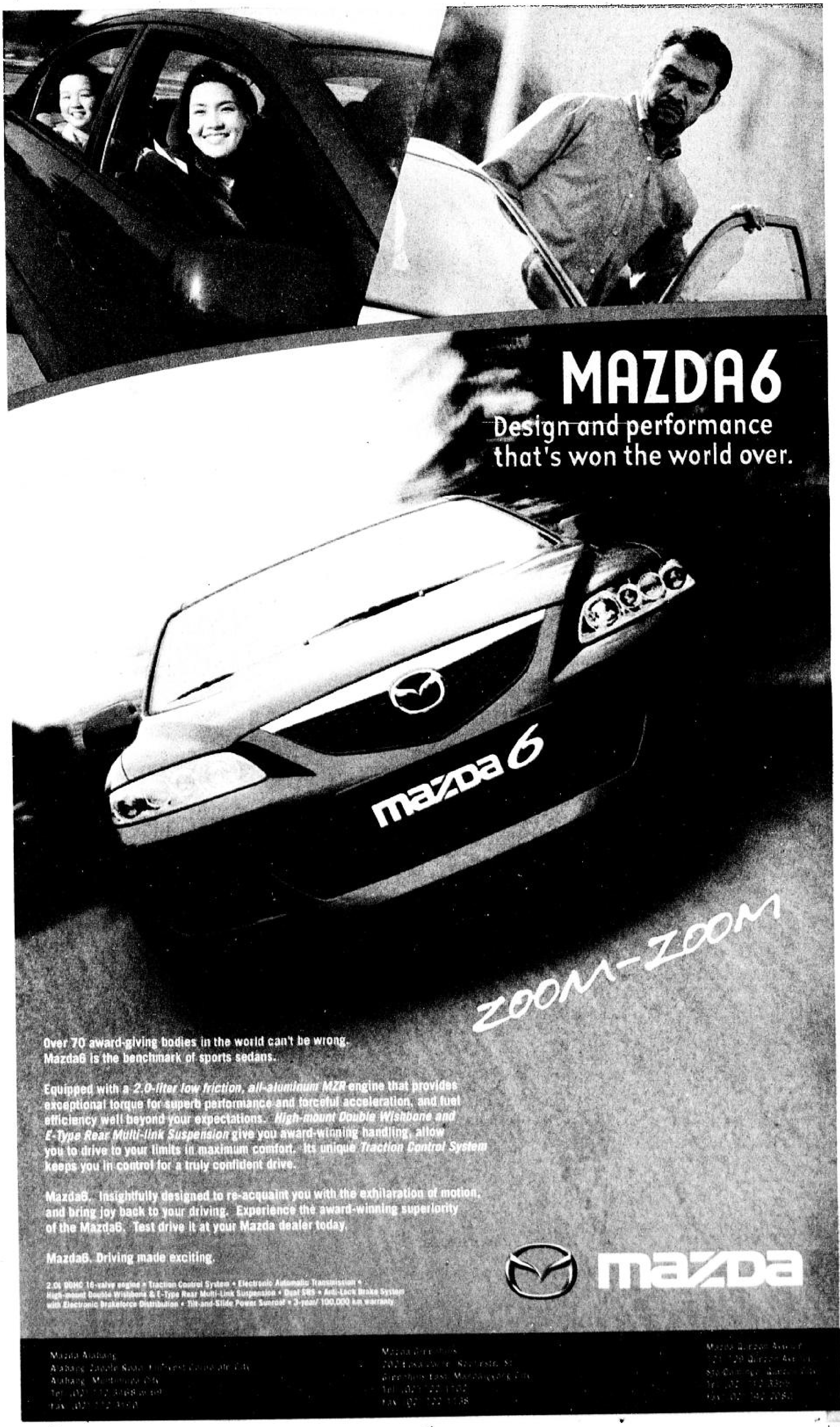
SHARES ended lower yesterday on a technical correction after three sessions of gains, traders said.

The benchmark 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange Index closed down 27.10 points, or 1.3 percent, at 1992.46, after rising 2.5 percent in the past three sessions, including Monday's 0.2-percent gain. The index traded within a range of 1988.00 and 2016.33.

The commercial-industrial, all shares, property, and banks and financial services subindexes ended lower. The mining, and oil sub-indicators finished higher. Decliners led gainers 52 to 49, while 48 stocks were unchanged.

The volume of shares traded stood at 2.69 billion shares valued at P3.88 billion, compared with Monday's 4.24 billion shares worth P2.56 billion.

DA Market Securities president Nestor Aguila said a number of issues were overbought, which prompted investors to shift funds to lower priced stocks. *AP*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IPO IN MID-MARCH

SM holding firm to go public

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SM INVESTMENTS Corp. (SMIC), the holding company of mall magnate Henry Sy Sr., has filed an application with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) for its maiden stock offering.

The actual size of the offering has yet to be set.

Sources close to the Sy family said SMIC's rush to go public was spurred by recent growth posted by the stock market.

Year to date, the benchmark Philippine Stock Exchange composite index (Phisix) gained 9.3 percent.

From December 2003 to end-2004, the Phisix soared 26.3 percent.

In a preliminary prospectus filed with the SEC, SM Investments said it might offer up to 30 percent of its expanded number of outstanding shares. For the minimum offer of 15 percent of its capital base, SMIC may sell 75 million new shares.

The shares will be sold in both the local market and abroad.

SMIC is tapping Macquarie Securities (Asia) Pte. Ltd. as global coordinator for the international offer, and BDO Capital & Investment Corp. for the domestic offering.

The domestic offering is set for March 8 to March 16. The offer price is expected to be at least P230 per share. The minimum price has yet to be set.

In the prospectus, the company said it was expecting to raise roughly P17.25 billion in gross proceeds from the offering. Deducting fees and other expenses, net proceeds were estimated at about P15.92 billion.

SMIC has interests in commercial centers through mall developer SM Prime Holdings Inc., and financial services and banking through Banco de Oro Universal Bank.

Three of its subsidiaries are already listed, namely, SM Prime Holdings (52.6 percent owned), SM Development Corp.(58 percent owned) and Banco De Oro (41.2 percent).

As of Dec. 31, SMIC's unaudited consolidated revenue stood at P34.3 billion, largely from its retail business which accounted for P24.6 billion. The balance of revenue was from rent and cinema ticket sales. Net income as of end-December was P3.9 billion.

The listing date for SMIC shares was set for March 22. Proceeds from its public offering will be used to finance projects related to tourism, leisure and property development (estimated at P12.1 billion) and repay a portion of existing loans (roughly P3.82 billion).

PSE,BOI to get more firms to go public

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

THE PHILIPPINE Stock Exchange (PSE) is proposing to enter into an agreement with the Board of Investments to encourage more big companies to go public.

PSE president Francis Lim said he was in the process of drafting a memorandum of agreement with the BOI to gather more data on companies mandated to conduct initial public offerings.

"It's payback time. Fair is fair. For these companies availing themselves of the incentives from the government, they should give their fair share to the investing public," Lim said.

The Omnibus Investment Code or Executive Order 226, enacted in 1987, requires that 10 percent of the shares of BOI-registered companies be held by the public within 10 years from registration.

To date, about 5,000 firms are registered with the BOI.

Companies that have expressed plans to conduct initial public offerings this year include utility firm Manila Water Co., independent power producer First Generation Holdings Corp. and personal products manufacturer Splash.

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₱9.8B in movie, music disc sales lost to piracy

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE FIGHT against audio and video disc piracy goes high-tech as the Optical Media Bureau yesterday signed a pact with a global music industry watchdog on the use of forensic equipment that would trace where illegal disc copies were made.

Also yesterday, the OMB reported that a total of P9.8 billion in movie and music disc sales was lost to piracy in 2004.

The agreement signed by the OMB and the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry would allow the bureau to use IFPI's forensic facilities in London.

The Zurich-based IFPI is a non-profit international association that represents the recording industry worldwide. It has at least 1,450 members in 75 countries, as well as affiliated industry associations in 48 countries.

Robert Youill, coordinator of IFPI's regional anti-piracy enforcement efforts in Southeast Asia, said the facilities were used to examine microscopic marks that mass-production machines leave on compact discs.

"These marks are much like people's finger prints or identifying marks left on bullet slugs as they go through gun barrels," Youill explained.

Youill, a former detective in the Hong Kong Police Force, said Southeast Asia was a manufacturing base of optical disc pirates.

"The Philippines, like some of its neighbors in the region, is a manufacturing base mainly because its production capacity exceeds local demand," he said.

Youill lauded the OMB for having shifted its approach to piracy from reactionary to strategic, "focusing the enforcement efforts not only on raiding retail stalls of pirated products but also getting a firm grasp" on how pirates operate their business.

He said the OMB's use of IFPIs forensic technology would be a "great leap forward" in the fight against criminal syndicates.

According to IFPI, the production of unlicensed compact discs was a big business and is done by organized criminal groups since a replicating machine cost $1 million in investment.

For his part, OMB chair Edu Manzano said the agency now had law enforcement powers as the implementing rules governing its operation took effect yesterday.

Manzano said that over the past four months, the OMB has seized pirated CDs of both music and movies at an average of 500,000 pieces a month.

OMB's biggest haul, he said, was 635,000 pieces which were confiscated during a raid in Quiapo last December.

OMB data showed that the discs seized in Quiapo were valued at P476.2 million. A forensic probe indicated that many of these might have been made in Malaysia.

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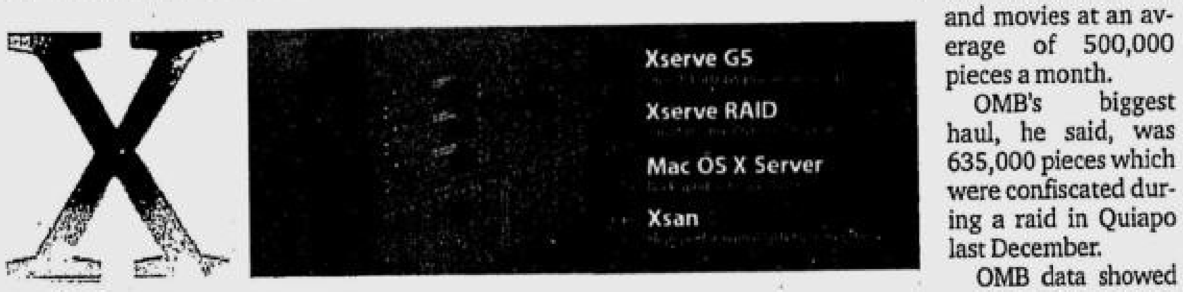

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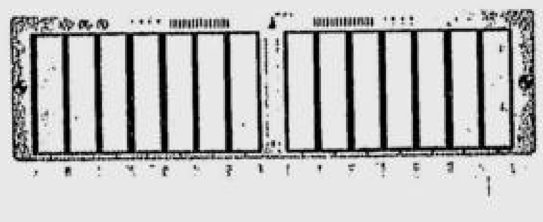

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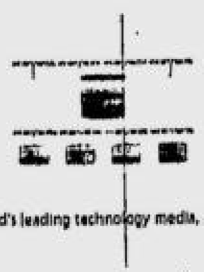

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DISCLOSURES

RIZAL Commercial Banking Corp. approved the purchase of some 421 million shares of First Malayan Leasing Finance Corp. at P1.2786 per share, subject to Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas approval.

* * *

BANK of the Philippine Islands said its stock and transfer book would be closed 30 days before its April 7 annual stockholders' meeting, or starting March 8.

* * *

MANILA Jockey Club Inc. and the Manila Jockey Club Inc. Raceday Operations Labor Union entered into a collective bargaining agreement, effective July 1, 2004 to June 30, 2009.

* * *

PILIPINO Telephone Corp. reset its annual stockholders' meeting from April 28 to May 9. Record date is March 11. ***Compiled by D.J. Yap, PDI Research***

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of February 1, 2005)

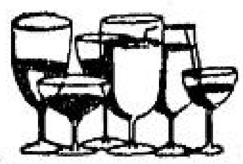
STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	1,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	31	31.5	30.5	31	501,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	58	58	56	56.5	1,183,500
China Banking Corp.	575	575	575	575	1,210
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	46.5	47	46	47	786,000
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.47	0.47	0.46	0.46	1,400,000
International Exch. Bank	18.5	18.75	18.5	18.5	222,700
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	31.5	32.5	31	31.5	2,434,200
Prudential Bank	400	400	400	400	7,510
Philippine National Bank	28	28	27	27	4,900
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	15	15	15	15	21,000
Security Bank Corp.	30	30	30	30	36,200
Union Bank of the Phil.	29.5	30	29.5	30	131,800
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
ATR Kim Eng Fin. Corp.	2	2	2	2	226,000
Bankard Inc.	0.92	0.92	0.92	0.92	10,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	194	194	194	194	960
Manulife Financial Corp.	2350	2350	2350	2350	5,140
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	2	2.02	1.98	2	833,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	129	129	127	127	210
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1740	1740	1735	1740	7,350
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	18	18	17	17.25	188,300
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.76	1.76	1.68	1.72	16,600,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	925	925	915	920	79,430
Ipeople Inc.	4.6	4.6	4.5	4.5	55,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.055	4,800,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.039	0.042	0.038	0.042	67,100,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	100,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.95	4	3.9	3.9	6,270,000
Transpacific Broadcast	1.36	1.36	1.36	1.36	23,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1415	1420	1410	1415	308,370
Ivantage Corp.	0.7	0.7	0.68	0.68	1,400,000
Philweb Corp.	0.012	0.012	0.011	0.012	74,200,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	17.5	17.5	17.25	17.25	22,800
Manila Electric Co. B	26	26	25.5	26	384,900
Petron Corp.	4	4.1	3.95	3.95	6,507,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.7	1.7	1.62	1.64	3,562,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.76	1.76	1.76	1.76	350,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	7.2	7.3	7.1	7.2	1,980,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39	300,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	3,451,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.47	0.47	0.46	0.47	2,330,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	1	1	0.9	0.9	110,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4	4.3	4	4.15	7,899,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	4.9	4.9	4.9	4.9	2,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	26,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.15	3.2	3.15	3.2	76,000
Cosmos Bottling Corp.	4	4	4	4	2,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	30.5	30.5	30	30	704,500
Jollibee Foods Corp.	27	27.5	26	26.5	338,700
RFM Corp.	0.8	0.84	0.8	0.84	190,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.34	0.35	0.34	0.35	210,000
San Miguel Corp. A	58	58	57.5	58	38,900
San Miguel Corp. B	77.5	77.5	76	77	181,700
Vitarich Corp.	0.27	0.28	0.27	0.28	1,300,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Atok-Big Wedge Co. Inc.	14.5	14.5	14.5	14.5	200
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0085	0.009	0.0085	0.0085	154,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	1,000,000
Ayala Corp.	7.8	7.8	7.6	7.7	11,751,000
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.75	1.04	0.75	0.88	8,140,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.8	3.85	3.75	3.8	1,546,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.031	0.033	0.031	0.031	10,300,000
A. Soriano Corp.	1.92	1.92	1.92	1.92	795,000
APC Group Inc.	0.53	0.61	0.48	0.5	41,120,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0095	0.0095	0.009	0.0095	56,000,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	20,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	10,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	21.25	21.25	21	21	37,100
BHI Holdings Inc.	310	310	310	310	60
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.165	0.18	910,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.08	1.08	1.04	1.06	19,029,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.245	0.26	0.245	0.26	2,990,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.25	0.25	0.24	0.24	2,500,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.44	0.44	0.39	0.39	9,400,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	5.7	5.9	5.7	5.7	6,281,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.037	0.038	0.037	0.038	8,600,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.18	1.18	362,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	9	9.1	8.9	9	1,266,000
F&J Princ.e Holdings Corp.	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	20,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	41.5	41.5	39.5	41	2,777,400
Global Equities Inc.	0.105	0.11	0.0925	0.0925	45,300,000
House Of Investments Inc.	1.36	1.36	1.32	1.34	825,000
Ionics Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	24,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.2	165,000
Macroasia Corp.	2.44	2.46	2.42	2.46	260,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.017	0.017	0.017	0.017	500,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.018	0.019	0.018	0.019	2,000,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.52	1.54	1.48	1.52	10,901,000
Mabuhay Holdings Corp.	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	100,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.53	0.54	0.51	0.51	54,180,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3	10,210,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1.22	1.26	1.22	1.26	86,000
South China Resources Inc.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	100,000
Seafront Resources Corp.	0.48	0.48	0.46	0.46	330,000
Tanduay Holdings Inc.	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	85,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.155	0.16	0.155	0.155	2,650,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.17	0.19	0.16	0.19	1,720,000
Zeus Holdings Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	10,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.7	1.7	1.68	1.68	54,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.9	0.94	0.9	0.94	140,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.0825	0.0825	0.0775	0.08	10,000,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.69	0.69	0.66	0.68	5,610,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	1.1	1.16	1.1	1.1	6,541,000
Manila Jockey Club	3	3	3	3	50,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.34	0.38	0.34	0.35	4,990,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	18	18	16.5	16.5	1,510,300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,000
PLDT (10% Pref.) Series U	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,200
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,200
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,200
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,500
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	4,000
PLDT 10% Pref Series Bb	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	9	9	8.9	8.9	4,677,000
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	90,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.32	0.32	0.31	0.31	8,190,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.16	0.2	0.16	0.2	47,850,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.42	0.42	0.41	0.42	10,060,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.56	1.56	1.52	1.52	5,055,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.225	0.23	0.22	0.22	2,570,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.21	0.21	0.2	0.2	700,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.13	0.14	0.11	0.12	820,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	2.6	2.65	2.6	2.65	30,000
Phil Realty And Holdings	0.2	0.21	0.2	0.21	1,320,000
SM Development Corp.	1.52	1.52	1.52	1.52	222,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	8.6	8.7	8.3	8.4	5,118,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	0.9	0.95	0.9	0.95	900,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	1.02	1.04	0.95	1.04	122,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.015	0.016	0.015	0.015	225,400,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	8	8.3	7.9	8	1,236,000
Benguet Corp. A	8	10	8	9.8	137,000
Benguet Corp. B	9	9	9	9	2,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	4.1	4.2	4.1	4.1	200,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.43	0.45	0.43	0.45	12,310,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.48	0.51	0.48	0.51	27,710,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.025	0.026	0.025	0.025	746,400,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.034	0.036	0.034	0.036	492,200,000
Omico Corp.	0.006	0.006	0.0055	0.006	91,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.24	1.32	1.24	1.28	7,187,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.54	1.64	1.54	1.6	24,653,000
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.4	0.46	0.4	0.43	3,860,000
OIL					
Interport Res.	0.006	0.007	0.006	0.007	20,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	8,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0075	0.008	0.0075	0.008	97,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	57,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.46	0.46	0.46	0.46	170,000
Pacifica	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	4,600,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	3	3	2.6	2.6	43,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.165	0.165	0.12	0.13	69,300,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.43	0.43	0.4	0.4	1,970,000

CURRENCIES

February 1, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.766812	1.000000	55.0970
Japan	Yen	0.007397	0.009647	0.5315
United Kingdom	Pound	1.444598	1.883900	103.7972
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.098315	0.128213	7.0642
Switzerland	Franc	0.645248	0.841468	46.3624
Canada	Dollar	0.618746	0.806907	44.4582
Singapore	Dollar	0.468254	0.610650	33.6450
Australia	Dollar	0.594566	0.775374	42.7208
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.034039	2.652590	146.1498
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.204478	0.266660	14.6922
Brunei	Dollar	0.466828	0.608791	33.5426
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000084	0.000109	0.0060
Thailand	Baht	0.019891	0.025940	1.4292
UAE	Dirham	0.208804	0.272301	15.0030
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.304100	71.8520
Argentina	Peso	0.262158	0.341880	18.8366
Brazil	Real	0.293517	0.382775	21.0898
Denmark	Kroner	0.134373	0.175236	9.6550
India	Rupee	0.017588	0.022936	1.2637
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.201820	0.263193	14.5011
Mexico	New Peso	0.068642	0.089365	4.9248
New Zealand	Dollar	0.545580	0.711491	39.2010
Norway	Kroner	0.120619	0.157299	8.6667
Pakistan	Rupee	0.012929	0.016861	0.9290
South Africa	Rand	0.129199	0.168489	9.2832
Korea	Won	0.000747	0.000974	0.0537
Sweden	Kroner	0.109774	0.143158	7.8875
Syria	Pound	0.014755	0.019242	1.0602
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024102	0.031432	1.7318
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000400	0.000522	0.0288

Consunjis' money machine

COCKTALES



Victor C. Agustin

THE CONSUNJIS should erect a statue in honor of Jose Antonio Leviste, the Board of Investments governor who sits in the Consunji-controlled Semirara Coal Corp. on behalf of the government's National Development Co.

Leviste, the husband of Loren Legarda, just handed the Consunjis a windfall of more than P1.5 billion.

How?

Only mid-year last year, the NDC and the state's Development Bank of the Philippines used to own 22.7 percent of the publicly listed Semirara Coal Corp.

As a result of a three-step decrease-capital increase-stock dividend, the NDC and DBP stake has now been reduced to about 4.85 percent of the country's largest coal producer, after NDC and DBP declined to subscribe to the capital call of P19.66 million.

Actually, all DBP and NDC needed to shell out was less than P4.5 million to maintain their combined percentage shareholdings.

But with DBP, NDC, and the rest of the minority shareholders like former Central Bank Governor Jaime Laya declining the capital call, the Consunjis ended up gobbling and paying for the entire offering. And as a result, the Consunjis' DMCI Holdings, another publicly listed concern, came to control 94.52 percent of Semirara, up from 74.35 percent.

Here's the kicker.

That P1/share the NDC and DBP turned down in the third quarter last year is now being offered by the Consunjis to the secondary market for a whooping P36 a share.

Had the NDC, never mind DBP, the prescience to subscribe to its proportionate shareholding of 4,181,126 shares at P1/share, equivalent to 41,811,260 shares after Semirara declared a 900-percent stock dividend, that P4.18 million would now be worth more than P1.5 billion.

Instead, that windfall went to DMCI. And that, including the 115 million Semirara shares DMCI is unloading for a total of P4.1 billion, explains why DMCI share price is now shooting through the roof.

Incidentally, in addition to Leviste, former Finance Undersecretary Victor Macalincag, husband of former DBP chair Remedios Macalincag, Cesar Buenaventura, Federico Puno, and engineer Eduardo Mañalac also sit on the Semirara board, along with, of course, the Consunjis.

Mañalac, we understand, represents NDC in the Semirara board, just like Leviste.

DBP, because of its small stake, has no board representation.

Semirara, currently suspended because of the secondary offering, resumes trading on Friday.

Having the last laugh

AT about this time last year, retired Bangko Sentral Governor Gabriel Singson had to hide his face behind a napkin during a Citigroup regional investment forum, where every speaker to a man were bullish on Southeast Asia except the Philippines.

With the local stock market churning out the second highest gain in the region and the economy posting a respectable 6.1 percent growth last year, the former law professor now has taken to posing an impish question, like what he did during last week's investment forum in Hong Kong, also hosted by Citigroup: "Where did you all go wrong?"

After an embarrassed laugh from the suit brigade, Singson apologized for the harsh question, and rhetorically rephrased his question to, "I mean, what did the Philippines do right?"

Fast food gone fast

DON'T go around looking for a quick bite at the Greenbelt 3 fast-food area. There is none.

In fact, even the fast-food stalls are gone.

The various concessionaires had packed up after serving their last meals on Monday. According to one shop owner, the entire area will be transformed into another higher-end restaurant row, similar to those now lining up the first and second floors of Greenbelt 3.

Apparently, landlord Ayala Land is relocating all the cheap eats to the old Greenbelt, closer to the office buildings, or to Glorietta, on the other side of Makati Avenue.

Heard it through the grapevine

AMBASSADOR to the United Kingdom Edgardo Espiritu may be transferred to Moscow from London to pave the way for the appointment of businessman-horse breeder Antonio Lagdameo in his stead.

It is not clear where the current ambassador to Moscow, Ernesto Llamas, would be reassigned after the putative rigodon.

In addition to the Russian republic, the country's ambassador to Moscow also has jurisdiction over former Soviet states Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@pldtdsl.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)

Neda warns against . . .

From page B1

The figures were determined through a simulation made by the Neda. The study was shared with the Department of Labor and Employment-National Wages and Productivity Commission (DOLE-NWPC), which represents the department in House of Representatives hearings on the legislated wage increase or House Bill 345.

Under House Bill 345 authored by Zamboanga Rep. Roseller Barinaga, who is also chair of the House labor and employment committee, all private sector employees, whether agricultural or nonagricultural, are to be given a P125 daily wage increase. The amount will be on top of any anniversary wage increase, wage increase self-imposed by a company, and pay hike resulting from regularization of employment.

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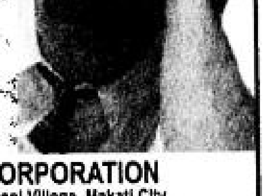

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PSBank
Peso TIME DEPOSIT

Deposit Amount (in pesos)	Interest Rates (%) 30 days	60 days	90 days	1 year
100,000 - 499,999	5.250	5.500	5.750	6.000
500,000 - 999,999	6.000	6.250	6.500	6.750
1.0MM - 4,999,999	6.625	6.875	7.000	7.250
5.0MM - 9,999,999	6.750	7.000	7.125	7.500
10 million and up	7.000	7.250	7.375	7.750

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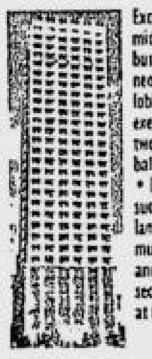

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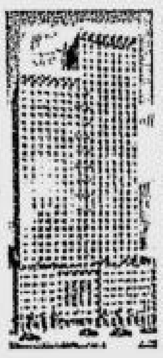

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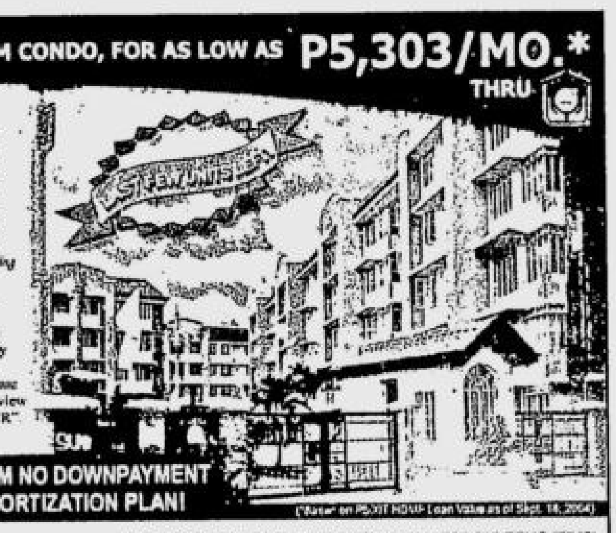

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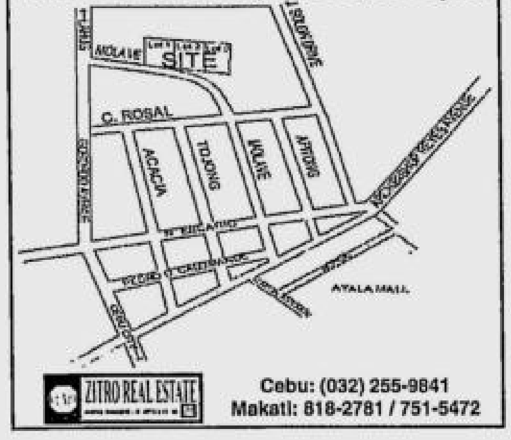

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Malate Catholic Church
Our Lady of Remedies Parish
Malate, Manila at 7:00 a.m.

Santuario de San Jose Parish
Greenhills East, San Juan
Metro Manila at 7:15 a.m.

Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception
Manila Metropolitan Cathedral
Intramuros, Manila at 7:30 a.m.

Nuestra Señora de Guia Parish
M.H. del Pilar St., Ermita, Manila at 7:30 a.m.

Stella Maris Chapel
3F ICTSI Administration Building
Manila International Container Terminal
MICT South Access Road, Manila at 12:15 p.m.

Santuario de San Antonio Parish
McKinley Road, Forbes Park
Makati City at 6:00 p.m.

St. John Bosco Parish
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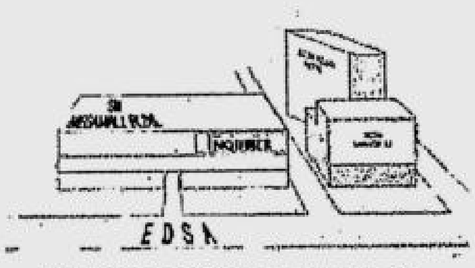

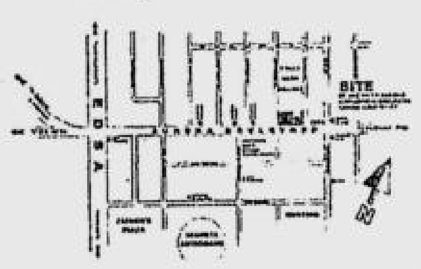

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CLASSIFIEDS

PACIFIC SUGAR HOLDINGS CORPORATION

173 P. Gomez Street, San Juan, Metro Manila

INVITATION FOR PREQUALIFICATION AND ELIGIBILITY

PACIFIC SUGAR HOLDINGS CORPORATION has acquired all the raw sugar milling and sugar refining equipments, boilers and power generators, buildings, warehouses and all other related assets of the **CALINOG-LAMBUNAO FACTORY** located in Calinog-Lambunao, Iloilo. It intends to transfer all these assets to its factory sites in Guihing, Davao del Sur and Matalam, North Cotabato.

For the above project, **PACIFIC SUGAR HOLDINGS CORPORATION** is inviting interested General Contractors with experience in the dismantling and shipping of factory equipments, boilers, power generators, warehouses and buildings in a **PREQUALIFICATION PROCESS** to send a **LETTER OF INTENT** and their **COMPANY PROFILE** which shall contain a background information about their company, projects done the last 3 years, latest audited financial statements, bank references, permits and licenses (PCAB, SEC, DTI, Mayor's Permit, etc.) and other pertinent informations about their firm.

Interested contractors are requested to prepare two (2) copies of all submissions which should be submitted not later than February 15, 2005 either to our offices in Manila or in Davao City, to the attention of the following:

Ms. Ludy P. Avila
Davao Sugar Central Co. Inc.
173 P. Gomez St., San Juan
Metro Manila
Tel. No.: 723-1325

Mr. Constancio B. Galinato
Davao Sugar Central Company, Inc.
2nd Floor East West Bank Bldg.,
Phase 1 Insular Village Lanang, Davao City
Tel. No.: (082) 234-0796

SCOPE OF WORKS may be obtained from the above named persons.

Only those Contractors the Company will pre-qualify will be invited for a SITE VISIT to Calinog-Lambunao and requested to submit their PROPOSALS. Dates of site visits shall be arranged at a later date.

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRARIAN REFORM
CAMARINES NORTE PROVINCIAL OFFICE

NOTICE OF COVERAGE

Pursuant to Section 7 of Republic Act No. 6657, the following landowners are hereby notified that their property/properties hereunder listed to wit:

	Landowner	Location	Area (Has)	Title No.
1.	Sps. Leovigildo Ferrer & Lorenda Narido	Talsan, Basud, Camarines Norte	19.6524	T-48736
2.	Pedro Flores	Binatagan, Basud, Camarines Norte	10.1282	P-2186
3.	Leon Dejelo	Magsaysay, Capalonga, Camarines Norte	20.8771	P-2285
4.	Eleno Parale	Binawangan, Capalonga, Camarines Norte	18.1217	P-2299
5.	Clara Parale	Del Pilar, Capalonga, Camarines Norte.	14.2128	P-1726
6.	Teodoro San Juan	Mabini, Capalonga, Camarines Norte	8.0054	P-2303
7.	Narciso Licas	Mabini, Capalonga, Camarines Norte	11.3872	P-7779
8.	Genovevo Florendo	Binawangan, Capalonga, Camarines Norte	12.1937	P-1853
9.	Jorge Liz	Magsaysay, Capalonga, Camarines Norte	6.4551	P-2901
10.	Roscel Agro-Industrial Corporation	Calasgasan, Daet, Camarines Norte	7.6445	T-21684
11.	Roscel Agro-Industrial Corporation	Calasgasan, Daet, Camarines Norte	9.9253	T-21685
12.	Und. Int. of Gregorio Perez & Macario Perez	Calasgasan, Daet, Camarines Norte	15.0000	T-18180
13.	Delfina Heraldo	San Rafael, Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte	22.8823	P-744
14.	Mateo R. Amion	San Pedro, Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte	11.0351	T-20772
15.	Jose D. Cuyugan	Salvacion, Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte	10.1759	T-37837
16.	DBP/Victor Pariña	San Jose, Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte	21.6454	P-8807
17.	Marina S. Querol	San Isidro, Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte	23.9959	P-3045
18.	Arsenia Villanueva	Tamisan, Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte	12.6063	P-3674
19.	Pablo Valeroe	Tamisan, Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte	13.0292	P-5870
20.	Rodolfo Cereno	San Jose, Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte	13.0158	T-19040
21.	Vivian Balce	Macogon, Labo, Camarines Norte	10.4595	T-13980
22.	Juliana Balce	Macogon, Labo, Camarines Norte	10.4595	T-13981
23.	Lolita Villalva Reynolds	Basy, Labo, Camarines Norte	9.1439	T-13329
24.	Aurea Peñalosa	Exciban, Labo, Camarines Norte	10.3052	P-6979
25.	Anecita de Lara	Malatlang, Labo, Camarines Norte	6.8069	T-5278
26.	Anecita de Lara	Malatlang, Labo, Camarines Norte	5.7050	T-1371
27.	Maria Floriano	Iraya Sur, San Vicente, Camarines Norte	10.0000	T-14502
28.	Oliva Rafer	Sto Niño, Talisay, Camarines Norte	0.1324	Lot 2599
29.	Oliva Rafer	Sto Niño, Talisay, Camarines Norte	2.5202	Lot 2593
30.	Oliva Rafer	Sto. Niño, Talisay, Camarines Norte	1.3019	Lot 2608
31.	Oliva Rafer	Sto. Niño, Talisay, Camarines Norte	0.6999	Lot 1161
32.	Oliva Rafer	Sto. Niño, Talisay, Camarines Norte	0.0107	Lot 1162

are now covered under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program. Under DAR Administration Order No. 1, Series of 2003, the right to choose the area to be retained must be exercised within Sixty (60) days from the date of Publication of the Notice of Coverage. Failure to exercise this right of retention within the prescribed period shall be considered as a waiver of the right/privilege to: apply for exemption/exclusion or retention, nominate children as beneficiaries or submit evidence for determining just compensation.

Under Executive Order No. 405, we shall request the Land Bank of the Philippines to determine the reasonable Land Value of the said property being acquired pursuant to Section 17, of Republic Act No. 6657.

December 7, 2004.

(Sgd.) HUBERTO L. VILLARAZA, CESO V
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(PDI-Feb 2, 2005)

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E-mail: peopleatwork@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Raul O. Marcelo
Subsection Editor Regina Galang Reyes

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After failures, producer 'cries' all the way to success

FIVE companies band together to bring a unique public service program for jobseekers and employers, "My Trabaho" Match. This program links jobseekers and employers to facilitate employment of applicants qualified for vacant positions. It provides a database that will be made available to as many employers as possible to speed up the employment process. Signing for their companies are: (seated from left) Quantum X Managing Partner Robert John Oh, STI Executive Vice President Peter Fernandez, Inquirer President Sandy Prieto-Romualdez, Optimus Innovations Inc. Chair Juan "Babst" Reyes, Jr., and Manila Broadcasting Company President Ruperto Nicdao, Jr. Witnessing the signing are (standing from left): Optimus Consultant Cat Sugay, STI Vice President Cesar Herrera, STI public affairs head Restituto Bundoc, DZRH Sales Director Jose Ma. Parroco, Inquirer SVP Marketing Rene Reinoso, and Optimus Innovations, Inc. President Reggie Reyes.

ROMY HOMILLADA

CAREER TALES

By Cecile G. Garcia
Contributor

THOUGH "Crying Ladies" did not make it as a finalist in the Best Foreign Film category of this year's Oscars, Tony Gloria has every reason to stay upbeat. After all, the film was mentioned in certain web sites as a top contender and has earned recognition in film festivals abroad. It was also named best picture in the 2003 Metro Manila Film Festival. " "'Crying Ladies' was an adventure for me," says Gloria who produced the movie for Unitel Pictures.

Unitel Pictures, of course, is the new addition to Gloria's growing roster of companies under the umbrella of Unitel Productions, Inc., one of the leading production house (for TV commercials) in the country today. Gloria founded the production firm 20 years ago. He is president and CEO.

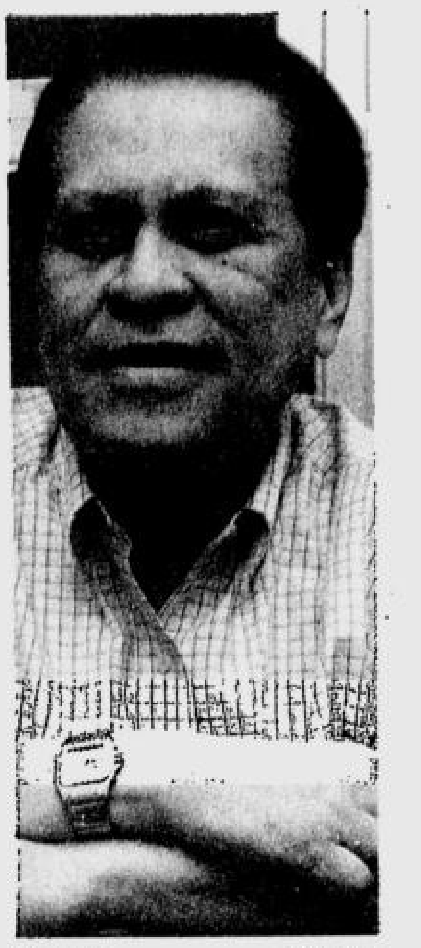
Aside from Unitel Pictures, other companies affiliated with Unitel Productions and headed by Gloria as well, are Pictureworks, Optima Digital and Unico Entertainment. Pictureworks does video documentaries and other corporate multimedia requirements. Optima Digital is presently the top post-production house in the country, while Unico Entertainment is engaged in feature films distribution.

Gloria's career, spanning 30 years, began right after he graduated from the University of the Philippines where he finished AB, major in Speech and Drama. (He took up Special Studies, Film and Advertising courses at The Parsons School of Design in New York City later on.) He recounts, "I joined the Philippine Advertising Counselors (PAC), the top ad agency in the '70s. The only thing I wanted then was to be in the advertising industry." PAC first hired him as a writer/producer. Eventually, he became audio-visual director, then creative director, and finally, senior VP for creative services. "I was handling big accounts, including San Miguel Beer," says Gloria. The most exciting part of his job was dealing with production houses. "I've always liked to be in production," he adds.

When he quit PAC after 12 years, Gloria put up TVC (Television Commercial Productions). Two years later, he established Unitel Video, forerunner of Unitel Productions, which came into existence in 1985. Says Gloria, "I wanted to put up the best production house because I had been exposed to how things were done I other countries." Besides, it had been his dream, to have his own business.

In whatever endeavor, Gloria is largely motivated by a desire to be better than the rest, to do something novel. He points out, "That's why I enjoyed doing 'Crying Ladies.' The story, which was about professional mourners, was unusual." While he would like to do more quality films and has set his sight on being able to do one that will be shown and watched by audiences worldwide (not just in festivals), Unitel Productions continues to turn out 15 commercials every month, which is a lot, avers Gloria, considering that it takes three to five days to shoot one commercial.

What's behind Unitel's success? "A great part of it is having competent people," explains Gloria. "You can't do it alone, no matter how good you are. Teamwork is essential and this is very strong at Unitel." A collaborative sort of person, one who likes to consult, Gloria is proud of the fact that the production house has a very low turnover. He observes, "I suppose it's the culture which is very supportive, creative and competitive in a healthy way. Also, I give my staff elbow room. There's a lot of autonomy." Another reason for Unitel's success apparently is its reliability. We're known to clients. They trust us. They know we will deliver a good product," says Gloria, who tries as much as possible to review every commercial they produce.



GLORIA RAFFY LERMA

Though he allows his staff to be independent and does not get involved in every little thing that goes on at Unitel, there is one thing Gloria relishes. "I'm very active in hiring or recruiting people," he claims. "I make it a point to interview applicants. I enjoy doing this." While he's not averse to hiring freelancers, Gloria prefers having an in-house staff, especially in key positions. Unitel has its own directors, editors and producers. "It would be difficult to promote teamwork if you don't have permanent people," remarks the CEO.

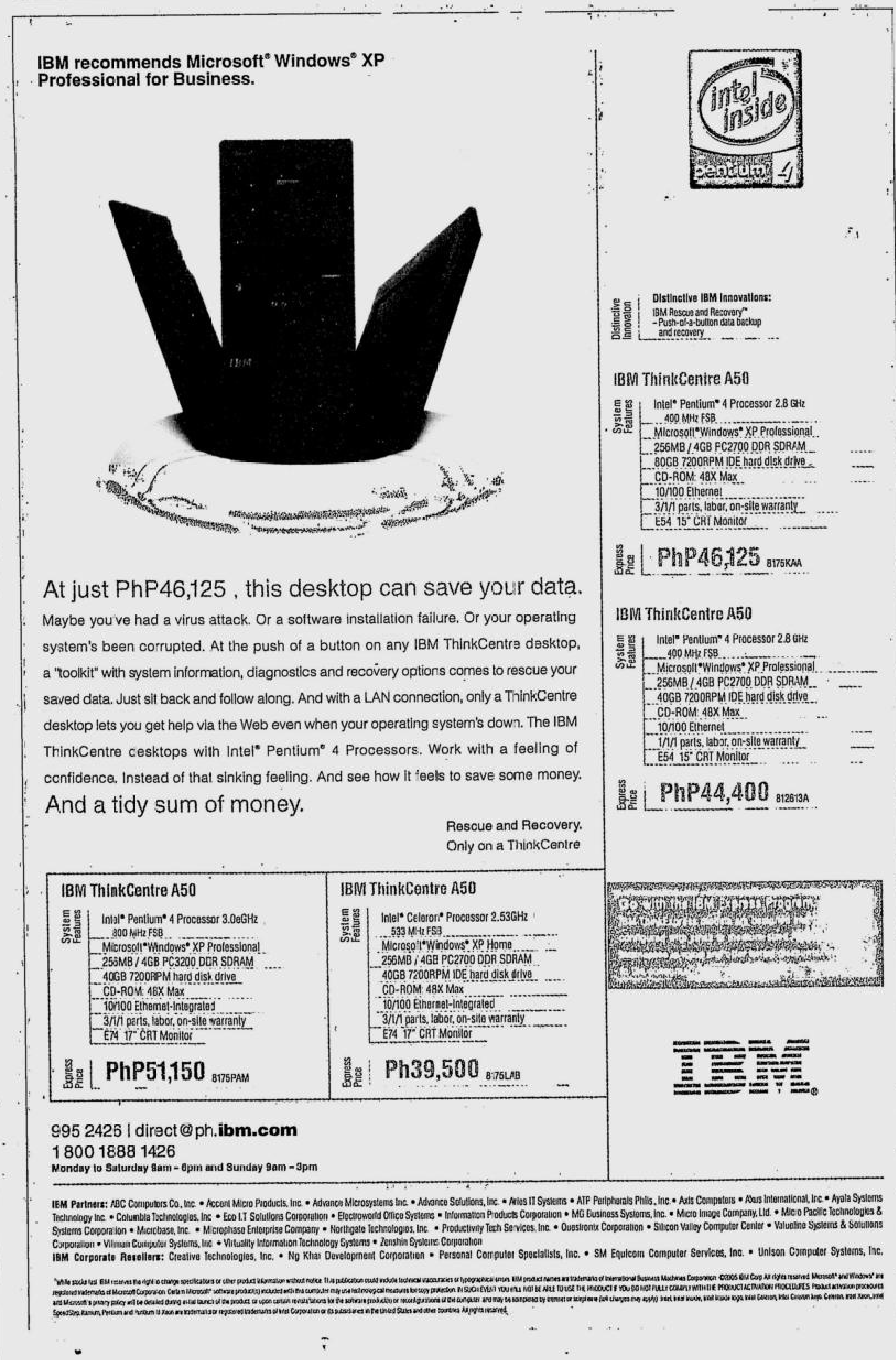
Like everyone who has ventured into business, Gloria encountered difficulties in the beginning. The first years were the toughest, he recalls. Indeed, getting Unitel on its feet has been the biggest challenge of his life so far. According to him, he lost his money and had to sell his house and mortgage two of his cars during the first three years. Things improved on the fourth year. "But I was not getting any dividends. I was putting everything back into the company. I wanted the best equipment and the most complete." For sometime, he had to postpone a lot of other things he wanted to do.

Five years ago, Gloria was named one of the 25 Mavericks of Advertising by the 4As (the Association of Accredited Advertising Agencies, Philippines) during its 25th Year Anniversary celebration. Cited for his work and contribution to the advertising and production industries, Gloria was in the company of industrial giants such as Geny Lopez of ABS-CBN who was given a posthumous award and Tony Tan Caktiong, founder of Jollibee, to name two. Gloria considers this recognition a significant highlight of his career.

Unitel's venture into full-length feature films, the first time for a production house, is no less significant, says Gloria who's been a movie fan all his life. "When I was growing up in Naga, I used to sneak out so I could watch movies," he reveals. Beyond making movies, he hopes to have a role in nurturing young talents. "I would like to give them an opportunity to showcase their work. I've been talking to young scriptwriters and directors. Unitel Pictures has a program for them."

Gloria, who describes himself as a "restless soul," puts a premium on integrity, having seen the example set by his late father, a teacher and later on, a high school principal in Naga. "He taught me that we must keep our integrity, no matter what happens." Traditional in a sense, he values his family—his sister and his nieces and nephews. As well, he values his friends and the people he works with, and his independence.

And what has this maverick learned from life? His reply: "I have learned to savor the moment when it's good because good things don't really last. I have learned that we must always try to improve, to do a little better every time. I've learned to accept failure as a part of life. There's not much we can do when it happens, except hang on and hope that we survive. Like a storm, it will pass."



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'My sister needs capital!'

By Tita Datu Puangco

WHILE I was cutting some of the important clippings requested by my boss, I came across your write-up last Dec. 22, 2004 in People at Work in the Philippine Daily Inquirer. I am touched with the manner you help Filipinos who write you. This is the reason why I chose to write you.

I told myself "this is it... thank God," this is the answer to my sister's problem. My sister has a *sari-sari* store in need of working capital. She has experience working in a family restaurant together with the husband from April 2001 to July 2004. Unfortunately, the owner closed the said establishment.

They are now living in Biñan, Laguna. Her husband is working as a chief cook in Cavite. She has three children and her second daughter is the smartest in her class. She has a lot of dreams for their future. Last Christmas, my sister confided she really needs capital. I can't help her since I am a single parent with six dependent children. I work as an administrative assistant in Makati and my salary is not enough for us.

I really want to help my sister. Please consider my letter. Am hoping for a positive response.

Concerned Sister

Advice
For the Anxious Person at Work

Thank you for your letter. I can empathize with your desire to help your sister. I can sense your frustration with your inability to help solve her problem of lack of capital. But is lack of capital really the problem? Or is it probably that she may be in the wrong business?

Let me explain myself. The need of your sister's family goes beyond being able to subsist from day-to-day. She has children who are in school and she wants all her children to have a promising future. This means she and her husband must be able to set aside money for education, which I suggest can take the form of college educational plans.

A *sari-sari* store may not be able to turnover enough money to ensure savings. We all know how *sari-sari* stores can grow like mushrooms in a locality. Eventually, because of competition, sales can go down and sometimes to break even can be difficult.

Reading your letter, I realized that your sister's family has core competence in food preparation and management. My suggestion is for her to set up a *carinderia*, where the couple can use their competencies and where daily turnover can be a hundred percent. The key is to find the right location, where people traffic is aplenty. Ideal would be a place where jeepneys and tricycles wait for passengers. Make sure you don't set up near a convenience store that offers cooked food. Scour the area for competitors and understand their rates and food offerings. Do not go into an area where competition is stiff.

To be successful in this business, you have to offer affordable, clean and quality food. I observe that successful *carinderias* operate 10 to 12 hours a day. They serve breakfast, lunch and dinner. They also provide take-home food. You will need initial capital to set up from as little as P3,000 to a high of P20,000, depending on the amount you need to pay for rental on the place. You can manage your cash flow if you agree with the owner of the stall to pay rent on a daily basis. If your sister can prepare a computation of her cash flow for such a project, she can present this to a rural bank that offers micro-financing with a mechanism for daily or weekly payments on the loan.

Behind our office building in Makati are food stalls. My estimate of their gross incomes could be a high of P10,000 a day. You are in Biñan, Laguna where there is remarkable growth in the residential and working population. The idea of a food stall may also work for you. Another way is to cater viands to your neighbors, especially those who are working couples.

I have come across many case studies of successful entrepreneurs who started with little capital but with fast turnover soon they experience the snowball effect. In a few years, they are able to expand their business and end up with savings to fund their children's education.

In this column, we don't provide capital. What usually happens when someone writes about his or her need, many of our readers offer help and this column simply provides the bridge between the person in need and the donor. God, touching the hearts of people is never outdone in generosity. We have faith that this will happen in your case.

By the way, Ancilla, our company has decided to allocate 10 percent of our consulting and training resources at the service of small business owners and entrepreneurs who seek professional services (beyond a written response through this column) at affordable rates.

Thank you for writing. God bless you.

(Ms Puangco is CEO and chair of Ancilla Enterprise Development Consulting. Send feedback through e-mail to advice@ancillaedc.com.ph *or fax to 892-2902.)*

When working moms care enough to let go

WORKING MOM

Gina Abuyuan-Llanes

CARE, and don't care, Working Mom Founding Editor An Alcantara told me one afternoon as she slowly cleared her desk for the day. I was whining about the pressures of sell-through, the mixed signals I seemed to be receiving from everyone around me about the magazine, and I was at my wits' end. That stopped me cold. Care and don't care? Yes, she shrugged. Care and don't care. Let it go.

I've resolved that this is the year my team at Working Mom will practice this piece of advice. We're usually all so driven, so tense and high-strung, that work becomes work, and we forget what another uber-Working Mom, our editorial director Thelma San Juan, told us editors during our annual planning: "Enjoy the process of creating!"

Playful creation

So this is where we're at right now: caring and not caring, creating while playing. We credit it to our move to a smaller—yes, smaller—space in the publishing office. At first we thought it would be the end, having to fit our four years worth of accumulated files (and junk) into smaller real estate, but on the contrary, things are much more streamlined, more efficient. Even my new cubicle has an energizing aura—while the old one was only a venue for others to rant and to dump problems in, this one seems to invite people to just have a chat, share a laugh, or just plain sit by the window and stare at Mimi, my adopted bonsai who enjoys regular visits by her mom, Chalk Brand Manager Sandy Henson. (The long holiday vacation left Mimi parched, but we're trying to revive her. She's hanging in there...)

I shared three more of my 2005 resolutions for the Working Mom team with Francine last week while we were at Holiday Inn Resort in Clarkfield. We were sharing a "two-beer special"—a couple of rounds to get us sleepy and brave the arctic cold inside the hotel room—and toasting to the success of the shoots and interviews we, Beauty Editor Nikki Domingo, and Liaison Editor Marla Silayan had just completed.

Resolutions

Let's get home early. This should be a no-brainer for working moms, right? Well, unfortunately, sometimes it's not. The OC gene in us seems to just kick in, especially during crunch time, and we sit at our desks for hours on end, tackling each task and obsessing on the next "to-do" item on our list. This year, I'm pushing everyone to get out of the office by 7 p.m.—literally kicking their butts and shooing them out by dinnertime The work will still be there the following morning, anyway. Forget it; you'll be forgiven. Stop when it's time to stop. Get home for your kids, your husband, your parents. Just learn to tear yourself away from your desks!

Get focused on the positive; don't be distracted by the negative. The pressure to beat competition is understandable, but if you don't know how to manage it, the stress will eat you alive. It will get to your health, your temper, your kids, your work performance. Take a look at what you do and see what a good job you're doing (provided you are working hard and well!). See how it touches people in a positive way. See how it works for others. If you're convinced, if you believe that what you're doing is good and honest and of unquestionable quality, take strength in that. Zone out those who like to bicker and burst your bubble.

Create a culture of thanksgiving—an attitude of gratitude. In a fellowship I attended last Monday, I learned that the best way to destroy pride, boastfulness and arrogance in any environment is to have a grateful attitude. Say thank you for another stressful day at work, because at least you've got work to go to. Say thank you even when your sell-through is below target—because the chance and challenge to improve has just been presented to you. Saying thank you opens up people to more learning; it makes them more gentle, more receptive, and more attentive. Saying thank you is being gracious. Heck, saying thank you—even to a "lowly" messenger—is just basically, downright proper.

So I'd like to thank everyone who's written, texted, or called me about this column and the magazine. You guys wouldn't believe how your feedback makes my day. More than just being read and heard, us "writers" all deeply desire to be reacted to—and I'm forever grateful to have connected you, in whatever way.

(Gina Abuyuan-Llanes is editor in chief of Working Mom magazine.

This February, learn to get connected with your loved ones, even if you think you're too busy, with Working Mom magazine. Working moms and one dad, Plinky Recto, Chesca Diaz, Cathy daRoza, Kate Gomez, Loren Legarda, and Paolo Abrera, are on the cover. E-mail feedback to gina_llanes@abs.pinoycentral.com.*)*

How did I deal with my ...

From page B8

Be patient and you will hit your stride once again.

Can you avoid making your family a dumping ground? I didn't kick the dog or disappear into the bottle or gym. I just wasn't myself and wasn't as present as I needed to be. I learned that when you're in a funk you have to put energy into working your way out both personally and professionally.

Can you remember your funk when you come across someone else who is in one? I'm now much more aware of the importance of reaching out to others who are in a funk. But don't try to fix their problems for them, offer your support and let them tell you what they need.

Talking about our career and personal stresses can help us become de-funked. Thank you readers, I feel better already.

Here are the results from a recent workingwounded.com/ABCnews.com online ballot: In the last year.

—I'm funk-less, 8 percent

—I've come close, 15.5 percent

—Funk? I've had a full blown depression, 27.8 percent

—I've been in a funk, 48.5 percent

(Mr. Rosner, an internationally syndicated columnist, author and speaker, is based in Seattle, Washington, USA. E-mail him at bob@workingwounded.com.*)*

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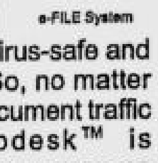
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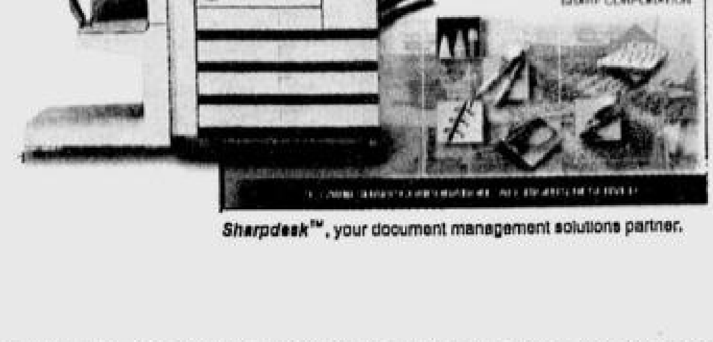

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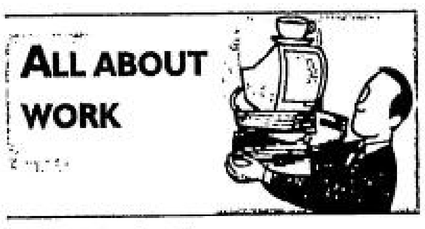
Pinay is on a mission for the marines

By Candy G. Villanueva
Contributor

WHEN the US navy or the marines are on a mission, Rose Camarista-Akers is out there to take care of their necessities. She makes sure they're geared right for their covert operations or well-fed before a dangerous mission. Camarista-Akers works for a department in Nedrac Inc., a company in Long Beach California that provides logistics support to the military under the Department of Defense program. Ironically enough, Camarista-Akers needs a war to keep her busy.

Nedrac, Inc. is a domestic and international freight forwarder and customs broker. It safely and efficiently ships goods from aircraft parts to household goods to military supplies through air, ship, truck or rail to any part of the world. Camarista-Akers takes care of the military goods. She makes sure the navy, marines, army, air force or coast guard are taken care of by providing logistics support.



Logistics support

Regularly, Camarista-Akers's team receives job orders from a military base anywhere in the world. As operations manager, it is Camarista-Akers's job to make sure these orders are transported safely and quickly to the requesting military personnel. She sets pick up and delivery dates based on the orders. Normally, there is an origin agent and another destination agent. So a package may be picked up from Virginia and delivered to Germany. This is tricky considering the different points of origin and destination.

Depending on the commodity being shipped, Camarista-Akers decides whether the order gets transported through the airport or the ocean terminal port. She then calls a trucking company for the pick up and drop off. With so many agents to consider and several destinations to track, a typical day could be stressful. "We deal with over 65 countries worldwide. Just imagine the type of people we have to handle. Dealing with their customs, government regulations and policies are overwhelming," shares Camarista-Akers. Sometimes, a delivery gets delayed or misplaced and then the stress level gets cranked up a notch higher. "I have to bite the bullet once in awhile just to speed up the transaction and make them (customers) happy campers."

But it's all in a day's work for Camarista-Akers. She would gladly meet and oftentimes exceed the military's high standards and expectations and deal with difficult people knowing that she is contributing in her own small way to help the country's soldiers. That plus the benefit of working for a prestigious company situated in one of the most exciting cities in the world is more than enough reason for Camarista-Akers to relocate from her sleepy hometown of Bacolod to the boat-lined shores of Long Beach.

Work hard, play hard

"People here work hard but they play harder especially on the weekends," shares Camarista-Akers. She enjoys Long Beach's fast-paced lifestyle and delights in how people grind to halt on the weekends to relax. "They are always on the go. They tend to drink more when they are off work and like to party. It doesn't matter what age group you're in, unlike in the Philippines, you see mostly young ones at the club or bar scenes."

AKERS

Back in the office, it's all business. Californians have a thing for punctuality. Eight o'clock for them is exactly 8 o'clock. Not 8:15 nor 8:30. Not even 8:05. Every working hour really counts. "Which in some way, is a good thing, because next thing you know, it's already a weekend." She claims the work could get really stressful but looking forward to the weekend getaways get her going.

After a heavy dose of caffeine, she usually starts the day attending to e-mail. The mornings are when she gets barraged with correspondences because most of the people she deals with are from different time zones. Often, she has to deal with urgent matters like shipment that gets held up by contraband enforcement or containers that end up in another continent. Other times, she's on the phone with military bases updating developments on shipments or checking on the billing statements. According to the talented operations manager, it's a job that requires several skills.

Give and take

The job requires a good head for business claims Camarista-Akers. Aside from a bachelors degree in business, a good knowledge in the import and export industry are useful. Because the responsibility requires interacting with different peoples of different colors and customs, one has to be an excellent team player with good communication skills. "Also, one has to know how to follow detailed orders, has to be computer literate and has to have very good common sense," she shares. If one can hack such a responsibility, the rewards are attractive, particularly the pay.

The average starting salary for the job is about $48,000 per year. "The pay, pension, disability benefits, my medical/dental/vision insurance are paid for by my employer. I don't have to pay premiums for that. I don't have to beat the traffic, too. We have a state tax though, other states don't have this burden," explains Camarista-Akers.

Aside from the tangible benefits, Camarista-Akers relishes the continuous learning she gains from her profession. "We learn something new everyday. My boss has been in the business since the '60s and still, he learns something new once in awhile." The fulfillment of being able to provide logistics support to those who risk their lives is also more than a reward in itself. "At least, I am able to help in small ways for them to have a smooth operation with their objectives."

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How did I deal with my funk?

DEAR Readers: This is a first in my eight years of writing Working Wounded. I'm going to tell you about the funk (more than a bad day and less than a depression) that I'm struggling with and what I'm doing about it. I've never written anything this personal before, but through the years I've been so impressed by the honesty and openness of the people who write to me, that I felt it was time to return the favor.

WORKING WOUNDED

Bob Rosner

Unfortunately, funks are like recessions. You can really only identify them after they've been going for a while. As a friend said, "According to most stress tests, you're dead." He had a point, I was adjusting to a new wife, new city, selling and buying a home, a major remodel, a new book and a new baby. I thought I was on top of it all, but I realized that I wasn't. Below I've listed what I've learned.

Do you acknowledge you're in a funk? Roller coasters never just go up; neither does a life or a career. A certain number of funks come with the territory of being a human, in fact, these days I worry about people who never admit to being in a funk.

What kinds of problems are you facing? There are two kinds of problems, the right kind and the wrong kind. When you're facing the "wrong" kind of problems (a felony, bankruptcy, etc.) you've got to make major changes. Upon reflection, I realized that all of my problems were the "right" kind so I only had to make a few tweaks to get back on track.

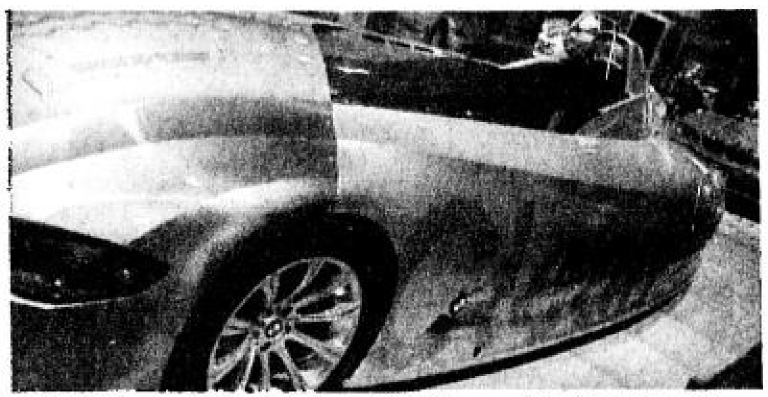
Can you accept that a lot of little stressors will take a toll? Looking back it's crazy that I didn't realize how much I was setting myself up for a funk. I learned from this experience that we're like frogs in a pot of water; we don't notice it when the heat is slowly being turned up. The earlier you do realize things are getting too hot, the sooner you can take steps to turn the heat down.

Can you be more patient with yourself? In a funk, hitting the ground running isn't an option.

HOW B7

MOTORING
E-mail: pr_motoring@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Cesar D. Mangawang
t us your feedback: inquirer mtr name/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

GM's Sequel has skateboard chassis with the three-tank design to provide a vehicle with a 300-mile vehicle range without compromising overall interior and trunk space.



BMW H2R, or "Hydrogen Record Car," is one of the first of a new breed of race cars specially adapted to run on liquid hydrogen fuel.

Carmakers brace for 'fuel economy' wars

Text and photos by Tessa R. Salazar

DROOLING over space-age automotive designs is one thing. Developing technologies that would eventually keep a country like the Philippines from being hostage to imported fossil fuels is another. In the blizzard-stricken North American International Auto Show (Naias), journalists and spectators alike were probably seeing the beginning of the end—the end of the 120-year-old supposedly sole truth that fossil fuels were the only sources of power.

Traditional makers of gas guzzlers pulled out some surprises from their hats in the hope of winning over a growing market of the fuel conscious. Concept cars running on hybrid sources of power and super-efficient diesel engines shared the limelight with traditional gasoline-powered vehicles. During the entire exposition, there was hardly a question on anyone's minds whether these new-generation vehicles would ever see the light of day outside the revolving stage. It was only a question of when, and at what price these cars would cost the everyday commuter.

Old names

New as these hybrid and super fuel-efficient cars may look and sound, old names would most likely be behind their development. A Mercedes-Benz E 320 CDI can take 80 liters (21 gallons) of diesel up to 1,000 km (600 miles). Newly developed combustion processes would make diesel burn even cleaner. Diesels emit 20 percent less CO_2 than comparable gasoline engines, and also reduces emission of hydrocarbons.

The Mercedes-Benz S-Class Hybrid, on the other hand, features a combination of electric drive with its 7GTronic automatic transmission. The hybrid configuration would ensure the diesel fuel would constantly operate in the most fuel-efficient range, and would help reduce fuel consumption by up to 25 percent, depending on the driving cycle not only during accelerating from standstill, during parking, or in bumper-to-bumper traffic, but also during runs at constant speeds.

DaimlerChrysler engineers have combined internal combustion engines with electric motors to such a level of sophistication that the transition between operating modes now takes place almost unnoticed. Toyota, meanwhile, has aggressively planned a rollout launch of a hybrid SUV by mid-June. And that is on top of its already commercially available hybrid Toyota Prius. Fellow hybrid cars Honda Insight and the Escape HEV are all commercially available.

World's first

DaimlerChrysler and GM are also set to co-develop the world's first two-mode full hybrid system. The two-mode hybrid system features one mode that provides fuel-saving capabili-

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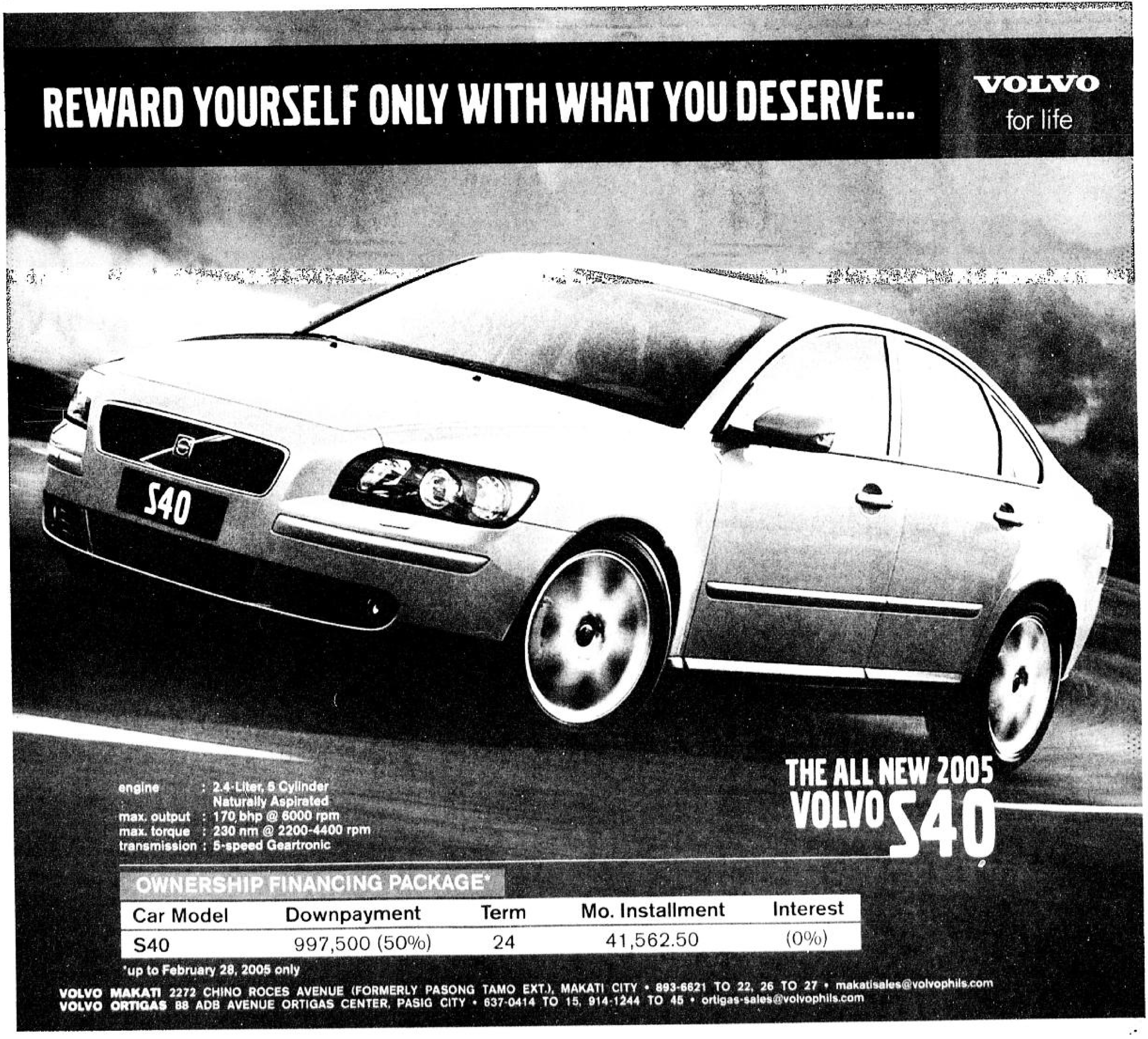

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SLEEK-DESIGNED Grandis

THE ALL-NEW Hiace Commuter

New autos to welcome 2005

By Charles E. Buban

CAR manufacturers always have gobs of new models or variants to unveil to their faithful every January, and for this year its the turn of BMW, Mitsubishi and Toyota to get the local industry off to a running start.

BMW Philippines got things started Jan. 19 with the unveiling of another variant on its highly successful range of sports activity vehicles in Tagaytay City.

More than a week after, it was Mitsubishi Motors Philippines' turn as it launched two new models: one to beef up its current sport-utility vehicle lineup and another, an all-new minivan that will succeed the Space Wagon lineup.

Then Toyota Motor Philippines Corp. last Saturday introduced a totally new commuter van before select motoring media in its dealership at the corner of Ayala and Metropolitan avenues.

Sporty trim

The BMW X3 welcomes 2005, its second year of production, with a new sporty trim to beef up its already formidable X3 lineup.

Called the X3 Sport Edition, this all-wheel drive sports activity vehicle carries several exterior refinements, including a more sporty exterior trim and firmer suspension.

"What's more, these enhancements in the Sport Edition will cost nothing for our faithful buyers since the 2.5-liter variant will still be available at P3.885 million and the 3.0-liter at P4.5 million," informs BMW Philippines corporate communications manager Lito German.

The Sport Edition still shares with X5 BMW's new xDrive AWD, an intelligent all-wheel drive system that helps provide optimum performance in virtually all driving situations—on slippery roads, uphill or downhill, and while cornering.

All-new platform

Built atop an all-new platform, the Mitsubishi Grandis is considered a totally new concept in automobile design.

The Grandis veers from what MMPC AVP for marketing services Froy Dytianquin calls as "boxy and slab-sided" that characterized most designs of multipurpose vehicles and station wagons.

This five-door P1.48-million Grandis is readily identified through its distinctively sculpted headlamps, aggressive body lines on the hood and on the sides, thus giving this MPV sporty elegance.

MONTERO Sport

Mivec engine

"But aside from its bold and sporty exterior, the Grandis conceals a muscular 2.4-liter power plant—a Mivec (Mitsubishi Innovative Valve timing and lift Electronic Control system) engine that delivers crisp acceleration and stunning performance with remarkable fuel economy," reveals Dytianquin.

The secret to this remarkable engine is Mivec's dual-intake valve camshaft that enables changing between low-speed and high-speed modes (above 3,600 rpm).

This gives the Grandis amazing acceleration (from standstill to 100 kph in 12 seconds) and superb overtaking ability (from 60 kph to 80 kph in 4.6 seconds and from 120 kph and 140 kph in 6.9 seconds), according to tests done by Mitsubishi.

Apart from its remarkable engine, the seven-seater Grandis also offers a versatile interior that adapts quickly to a number of clever seating and luggage configurations, thanks to third row seats that can be reversed to face the rear or be folded individually into the floor.

Newest member

Another Mitsubishi offering is the 2005 Montero Sport, the newest member on the Japanese automaker's SUV lineup sold in the Philippines.

In terms of size and engine power, it falls between the Outlander and Pajero (Field Master and the All New variant), giving Mitsubishi faithful an excellent choice at P1.580 million price tag.

Giving the Montero Sport its go-anywhere capability is its 2.8 turbocharged and intercooled diesel engine mated to a four-speed automatic transmission with a Super Select four-wheel-drive system.

"This system simply offers the advantages of both part-time and full-time four-wheel drive systems, as well as allowing you to shift on the fly between high range two-wheel drive and high-range four-wheel drive at speeds of up to 100 kph," explains Dytianquin.

Montero Sport's Super Select 4WD system offers three different driving modes: for city and highway driving; high-speed driving on slippery, gravel, or loose dirt surfaces; and low-speed driving while climbing steep inclines, going downhill, or moving on deep mud or sands.

Fortifying lineup

Committed to extending and solidifying its leadership in the local automotive market, Toyota introduced last Saturday its all-new Hiace Commuter van.

This is a milestone for the passenger van's history since the last time it had a major change was 15 years ago.

"Ordinarily, market needs concerning automobiles take about six years to change. However, the current Hiace had become a long-life model garnering high evaluations and increasing its market share continuously for 15 years," says TMPC in a prepared statement.

Major transformation

But despite the outstanding track record, the Hiace is indeed ripe for a major transformation.

"The all-new Hiace Commuter's square form and smooth body shape is definitely a fresh look. Though it's shorter in length, it's taller, a lot wider and much safer to ride in than its predecessor," says TMPC public affairs officer Ariel de Jesus of the all-new van.

At P1.048 million, the all-new Hiace Commuter is indeed an excellent package for those looking to load up 15 or more passengers.

It features a sliding door that opens up to 1.18 meters wide and 1.38 m high—much wider than its predecessor to allow easy access in or out of the van.

The heart of the all-new Hiace lies on its 2.5-liter turbocharged diesel engine that is mated to an instrument panel-mounter five-speed manual gearshift—a first for Toyota's commercial vehicles.

And if one want's to check or replenish the brake fluid, radiator coolant, windshield washer fluid and so on, Toyota designers made them more accessible by putting them all at the front access panel of the van.

Isuzu starts Sportivo test drive program

THE COUNTRY'S diesel engine technology expert, Isuzu Philippines Corp. has readily offered test drives for the newest member of the Crosswind family—the Sportivo—through its authorized dealerships nationwide.

The Sportivo "Drive to Thrill" program offers potential buyers the opportunity to adequately familiarize themselves with the newest innovation in the AUV category. What's more? All test drivers will automatically be given a token and an entry coupon for a chance to win a 21" JVC TV (with rack) every month within the duration of the test-drive program (Jan. 17 up to May 8).

Brighter illumination

The top-of-the-line Sportivo features large one-piece multireflector headlamps giving an aggressive aura, blazing with brighter illumination for increased visibility during night driving. To impress the buyers even more, the rear combination lamp now presents a chic and fashionable look. The sporty six-hole design radiator grille has a distinct characteristic for that rugged and strong bearing.

Outstanding highlights include a trendy two-piece bumper and an eye-catching 15-inch new design alloy wheel. To supplement the comfort and convenience aspect, it has the Isuzu's exclusive Flex Ride Suspension System—guaranteeing a smooth ride without sacrificing stability and safety.

SPORTIVO

Other features

In addition, the Sportivo brings the motorist closer to the SUV experience with the twin bucket seats for the driver and passengers of the first and second row—with improved cushioning support for increased riding comfort. Other distinct features of the Sportivo are the lever-type handbrake handle, center console with integrated cupholders, DVD entertainment system and front Facing third row seat.

Make the Sportivo connection now at authorized Isuzu dealerships nationwide. In Metro Manila, Isuzu dealerships can be found on Edsa Balintawak, Quezon Avenue and Commonwealth as well as in Pasig, Manila, Makati and Alabang. In the provinces, Isuzu dealerships are located in Isabela, Pangasinan, Cabanatuan, Pampanga, Bulacan, Cavite, Batangas, San Pablo, Bacolod, Mandaue, Cebu, Cagayan de Oro and Davao.

Carmakers brace for 'fuel-economy' wars

From page C1

ties in low speed, and in stop-and-go driving typical of urban commutes, and combines that with full-electric propulsion and engine power. The second mode is activated at highway speeds to automatically optimize fuel economy while providing full-engine power when conditions demand it, such as when towing or climbing steep grades.

The Opel Astra diesel front-wheel-drive concept vehicle uses GM's multipatented advanced hybrid system 2 and a 1.7-liter CDTI engine to deliver up to 25 percent improved fuel economy while maintaining fun-to-drive dynamics.

GM's Sequel has fuel cells, by-wire and wheel hub motor technologies. The carmaker has been able to double the range and cut the 0-60 mph acceleration time by half compared to current fuel-cell vehicles in less than three years. GM's goal is to design and validate a fuel-cell propulsion system by 2010 that would give current internal combustion systems a run for their money in terms of durability, performance and pricing.

Sequel travels 300 miles on its hydrogen supply, and accelerates to 60 mph from zero in less than 10 seconds. Current-generation fuel-cell vehicles have a range of between 170 and 250 miles and accelerate from 0 to 60 in between 12 and 16 seconds, depending on whether a battery is used, said Larry Burns, GM vice president of research, development and planning.

Extensive portfolio

"In addition to the Sequel, which is long-term in terms of technology, GM has an extensive portfolio of hybrid vehicles under development, as well as a wide range of gasoline diesel and transmission technologies that are improving fuel economy, and making our vehicles cleaner," added Burns.

GM hybrid buses, which had become a familiar sight during their regular runs shuttling Naias guests to and from the GM Renaissance Center and the Atwater entrance of Cobo Hall, offered a clean and economical alternative to the noisy, smoke-belching buses typical in developing nations' commuter scene. Hybrid buses, this journalist noted, could help solve the country's dependence on imported petroleum products, as what INQUIRER Motoring columnist Andre Palma had been writing about several times now.

Hybrid buses for RP?

This Issue was echoed by INQUIRER Motoring during the press conference with GM chair and CEO Rick Wagoner in Detroit. Asked what is his view about the possibility of GM's hybrid buses eventually being part of Philippine highways, he replied that it was an "important observation."

Said Wagoner: "The fundamental issue with so many of these advanced technologies is that they cost a lot more than internal combustion engines, and while the challenges may be particularly great in the Philippines, I can assure that the same kind of issues impact their acceptance really in all markets in the world.

Real challenge

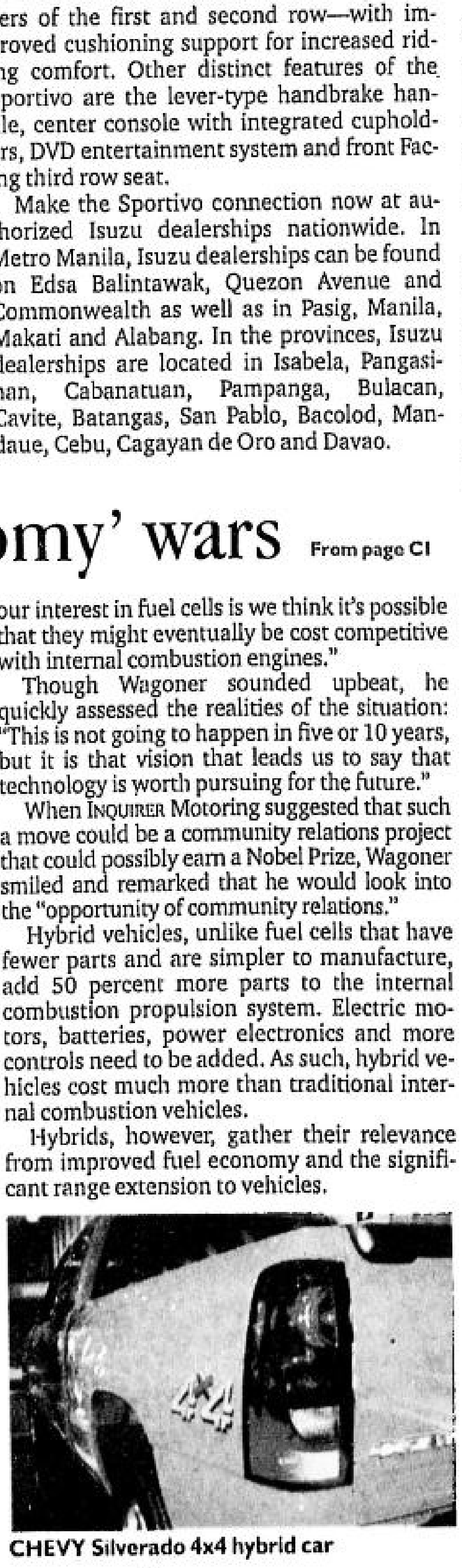
He added: "The real challenge is not just to come up with the next new ideas or technology breakthroughs. We have to make it so people can afford to buy it. While there are different views as to how the technologies will develop, the thing that is fundamentally at the root of our interest in fuel cells is we think it's possible that they might eventually be cost competitive with internal combustion engines."

Though Wagoner sounded upbeat, he quickly assessed the realities of the situation: "This is not going to happen in five or 10 years, but it is that vision that leads us to say that technology is worth pursuing for the future."

When INQUIRER Motoring suggested that such a move could be a community relations project that could possibly earn a Nobel Prize, Wagoner smiled and remarked that he would look into the "opportunity of community relations."

Hybrid vehicles, unlike fuel cells that have fewer parts and are simpler to manufacture, add 50 percent more parts to the internal combustion propulsion system. Electric motors, batteries, power electronics and more controls need to be added. As such, hybrid vehicles cost much more than traditional internal combustion vehicles.

Hybrids, however, gather their relevance from improved fuel economy and the significant range extension to vehicles.



CHEVY Silverado 4x4 hybrid car

NISSAN Frontier 4x4

Nissan Frontier: No less than legendary

IT'S the undisputed champ for four consecutive years. It is also the choice of journalists, broadcast news teams, the Philippine National Police and just about anyone with a monster job to do. If there were a hall of fame for pickup trucks, there would, undoubtedly, be a spot reserved for this marvelous piece of machinery.

We're talking, of course, about the Nissan Frontier, Universal Motors Corp.'s best-selling compact pickup. With four No. 1 titles under its belt and the loyalty of thousands upon thousands of satisfied owners, the Frontier remains the benchmark for dependability.

Reliable

Its reliability is nothing short of legendary. Think of major events in recent history and, chances are, a Nissan Frontier has figured in the scene. From the tumult of the Edsa revolts, the fury of Pinatubo, to the havoc of countless typhoons, Frontiers have proven their mettle in the field.

And just what makes a legend? You could say it's the DNA—the Distinct Nissan Advantage—refinements and features honed over the years that are the very core of this mean machine.

Powered with a 2.7-liter TD27 or a 3.2-liter QD32 engine, the Nissan Frontier is expected to carry out any tough job. Both engines offer a maintenance-free timing gear for extra durability and dependability.

How do you take on the fury of a volcano? Start with having better skeleton. Many truck makers will make do with chassis of partial length, box-section rails. Not Nissan. Frontiers are built only on ladder frames with sturdy welded, full-length rails. Fewer joints mean you get maximum strength, minimum flex and less noise and vibration.

Pipe-style beams embedded in the doors guard against side impact. Creases in the hood structure allow buckling at certain points, so it won't punch into the cabin in the event of frontal impact. In case of a collision, crumple zones absorb the crash energy while rigid safety zones keep the passengers protected.

Every Frontier sports a Load Sensing Valve that regulates front and rear brake pressure according to the load of the vehicle.

When one of the rear wheels begins to lose traction, the Frontier's Limited Slip Differential redirects power to the wheel with the better grip. So you never lose control of the situation.

Its passengers are kept comfortable by a calsonic air-conditioning system that ventilates and cools the entire cabin quickly and efficiently.

Prized possession

It was the proven winner at the 2003 Paris-Dakar desert rally. Fully half the vehicles that start the race never finish. Who won the first stage? A Nissan pickup. The key final stage? A Nissan pickup. The first truck to finish overall? You guessed it.

With the body that exudes elegance and the machine that gives superior driving performance, it is no wonder that the Nissan Frontier is a prized possession among pickup enthusiasts.

The Nissan Frontier is assembled and distributed by UMC and is available in both manual and automatic transmission. Currently on its 50th year in the automotive industry, UMC is the country's only 100 percent Filipino-owned and independent assembler and distributor of Nissan light commercial vehicles and recreational vehicles.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The little engine that could

CATCH MY DRIFT

Andre Palma

I SPENT most of my 20s elbow deep in grease and reeking of petroleum products. What could have possessed a 16 ½ year attendee of the Jesuit University in Loyola Heights, fated to a climate-controlled desk job somewhere in Makati, to want to learn the obviously plebeian skill of wrenching and tooling? Love was my reason. Like a schoolboy crush unfulfilled, performance automobiles were my elusive muses. I saw them every day and their beauty, even in creeping Edsa traffic, simply kept me enchanted.

Having decided the best way to learn garage skills was in an "in your face" fashion, I dove headfirst into the world of hydraulic lifters, TIG welders and "glorious" mechanical squalor. If one is close enough to the *maestros*, then maybe some of their genius would rub off. Despite spending years looking like a used shop rag and smelling like a gasoline station, I did not develop into a very good mechanic.

Enthralled

It was at this time though that I became enthralled, along with many of my generation, with the Honda B16A engine. Sweaty palms, elevated heart rates and butterflies were symptomatic of tuners, lost in thought, over the idea of owning one of these engines. This was more than mere engine infatuation; it was piston-struck passion.

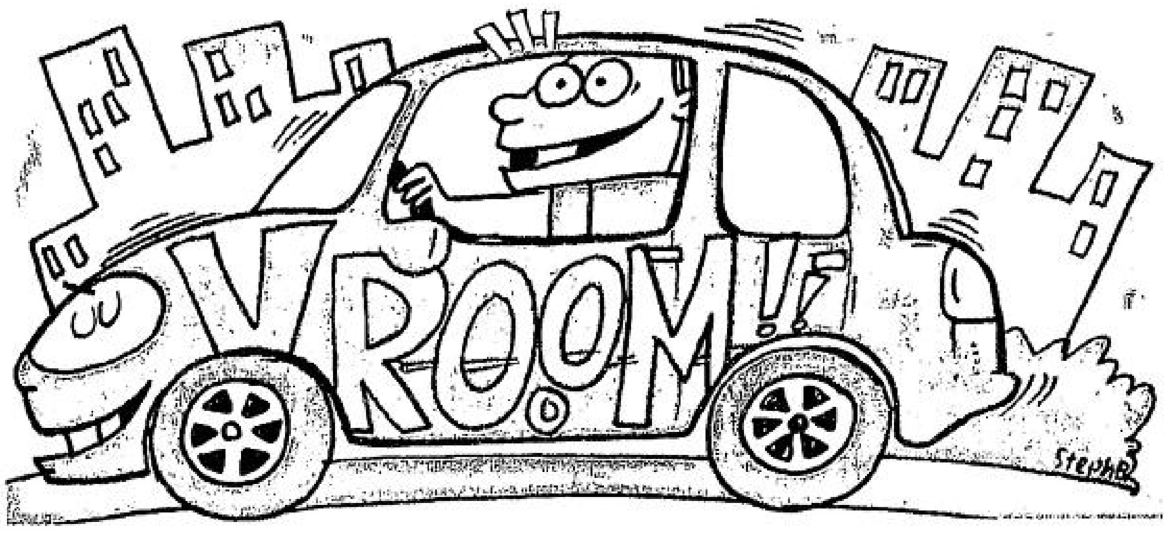
Why the dramatics and fuss over a puny 1600cc in-line four? Most of the cars in the compact sedan market were already equipped and provided for decent rides. From the beginning of its evolution through three chassis series of the Honda Civic (EF 1988 to 1992, EG 1993 to 1995, and EK 1996 to 2000), Honda's "little engine that could" was special. Its single cam cousin, the PH16A, had already been in the Philippine market since 1996 and was already making waves with its 127 horsepower and 7,200 rpm redline. Despite these already class-leading figures for a 1.6L inline four, we were still in for a pleasant surprise as the twin cam was to make its Philippine market debut in 1998.

A class of its own

The DOHC VTEC B16A made a staggering 160 horsepower with a 8,200 rpm redline, from 1.6 liters of displacement and this put it in a class of its own. This power was developed in an "all motor" fashion, meaning solely the engine; via airflow, compression and a little black magic gave it the motivation for more power. That magic was Honda's take on variable valve timing and it was called VTEC or Variable Valve Timing and Electronic Lift Control. This simple system of a computer-controlled solenoid, allowed the cam profiles to be adjusted, via a hydraulic locking pin.

This capability to adapt the profiles of the cam to match the engine's RPM was novel. Pre-VTEC cars mostly had a single cam setting that was either set in a "mild" (bottle rocket) or a "wild" (street rocket) setting. VTEC allowed the engine to serve

THE LITTLE/ C4



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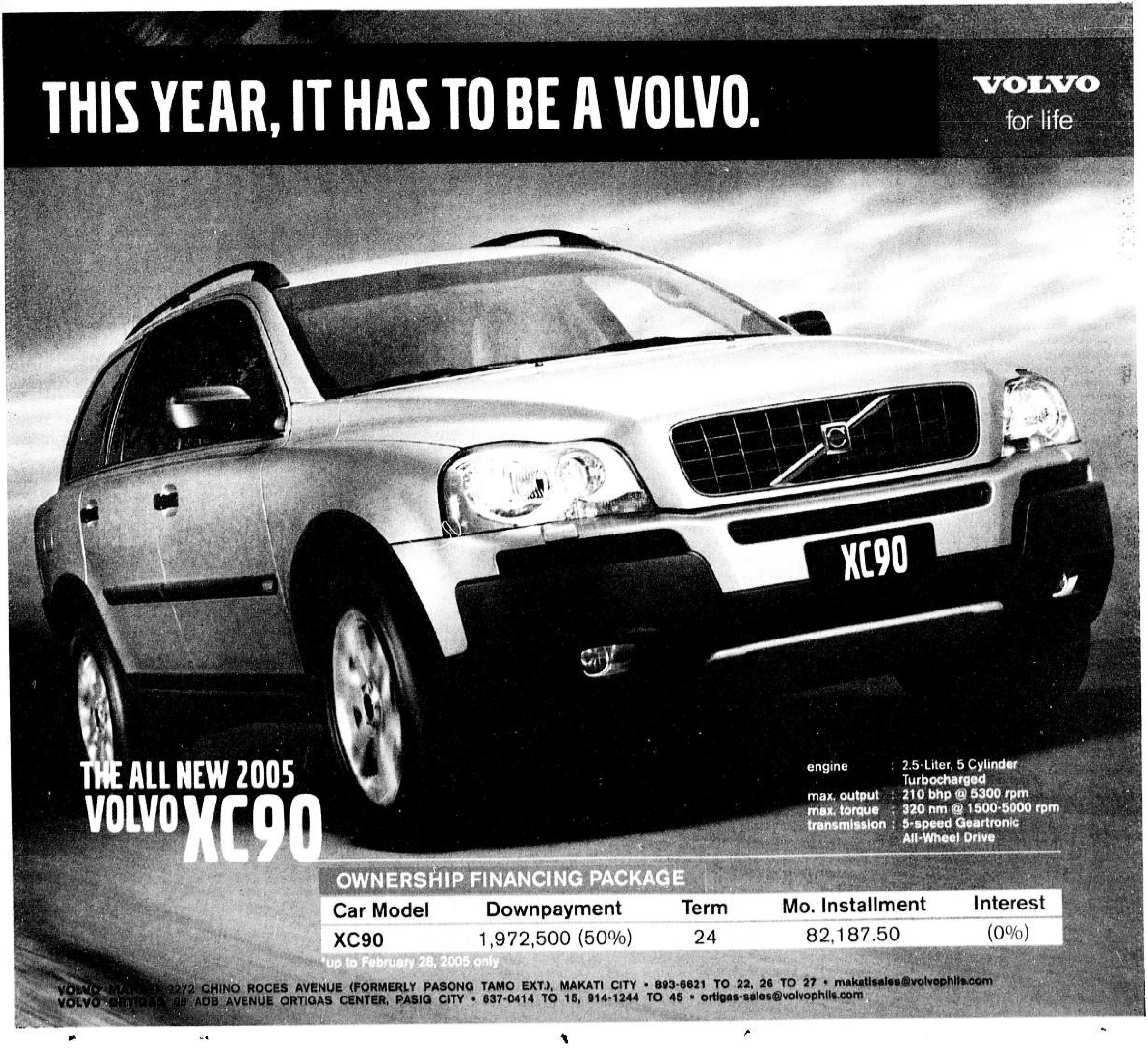

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The 12 fastest cars in the world

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

FERRARI, Maserati or Porsche? That question immediately popped up in my mind when I saw on my computer recently "The Fastest Cars" slide show by Dan Lienert of Forbes.com. Wisely, Forbes.com listed the cars with the fastest 0-to-60 mph (96 kph) acceleration time according to price category. "We judge by price because otherwise the list would be dominated with the usual hyper-expensive supercars," Lienert wrote. They also excluded discontinued car lines such as the Ferrari 360 Modena which has been replaced by the new Ferrari F430 coupé.

To underscore the trickiness of keeping a level playing field when comparing 0-to-60 mph times, Lienert quotes the disclaimer that BMW adds next to the 0-to-60 times on its lists of specs for its vehicles: "Actual acceleration results may vary depending on specification of vehicle, road and environmental conditions, testing procedures and driving style." Some manufacturers the author consulted said that they no longer provide 0-to-60 times to the media and instead direct them to car magazines such as Car and Driver and Motor Trend that have their own testing equipment.

The combination of engines, transmissions, body styles—plus the fact that the top speeds of many premium and exotic sports cars are electronically limited by their manufacturers to about 200 mph—may produce different acceleration results in a vehicle line such as the Porsche 911. Lienert says that they looked at cars' varying acceleration results with such different combinations and navigated the reporting of different 0-to-60 times from different places. Where possible, Forbes.com went with results from the manufacturers but when forced to choose between the results reported by car zines, they went with the best 0-to-60 times they could find.

That said, here are the 12 fastest cars in the world listed according to price bracket, not acceleration time:

FASTEST of the fastest: The 575 hp, V8 Saleen S7 coupé is a street-legal race car.

$30,000-$40,000: 1) Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution RS. 0-60 mph: 4.4 seconds. Base price: $27,929. 276-hp, turbocharged, AWD. 2) Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution MR. 0-60 mph: 4.7 seconds. Base price: $34,699. Although it is less powerful than the Subaru Impreza WRX STi, the Evo MR manages to equal the latter's 0-60 acceleration partly because it weighs less. 3) Subaru Impreza WRX STi: 0-60 mph 4.7 seconds. This sedan costs more ($32,770) than the entry-level Evo but packs more power with its 300-hp, 2.5 liter, 4 cyl. engine.

$40,000-$50,000: 4) Chevrolet Corvette Coupé: 0-60 mph: 4.1 seconds. Base price: $44,245. With 400 hp, the Corvette is one of four American name plates on this list and the lone vehicle from GM. Forbes.com writes that Ford's SVT Mustang Cobra gives the Corvette a run for its money, but was not considered because the all-new 2005 Mustang hit the showrooms and will soon be followed by a newly overhauled Cobra.

CHEVROLET Corvette Coupé

$50,000-$60,000: 5) Chevrolet Corvette Convertible: 0-60 mph: 4.8 seconds. Base price: $52,245. Lienert included this in the list because it has a different body style from the Corvette coupé with a different price and a different 0-60 time. Several hot competitors in this price bracket, such as the Audi S4 convertible (0-60 in 5.8 seconds) and Jaguar S-Type R sedan (0-60: 5.3 seconds), almost dislodged the Corvette convertible.

$60,000-$70,000. 6) Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG: 0-60: 4.9 seconds. Base price: $61,200. A souped-up version of the recently revamped SLK convertible, this roadster is powered by a 355-hp, 5.4-liter V8 engine.

FORD GT

$70,000-$80,000. 7) Porsche 911 Carrera S. 0-60 in 4.9 seconds. Base price: $79,895. A high-performance version of the entry-level Carrera 911, the Carrera S has the new 355-hp, 3.8-liter, 6-cyl. powerplant for the 2005 model year..

$80,000-$90,000. 8) Dodge Viper SRT-10. 0-60 mph: 3.9 seconds. Base price: $81,795. "With astonishing raw power coming from its 500-hp V10 engine, the Dodge Viper is both an American classic and competition for cars that are far more expensive. In the 0-60 sprint, it beats the $178,000 Mercedes CL65 AMG (4.2 seconds) and gives Mercedes' $453,000 SLR McLaren supercar (3.8 seconds) a close match." A reader who owns one asserted that it can do 0 to 60 in first gear.

DODGE Viper SRT-10

$90,000-$100,000. 9) Maserati Spyder Cambiocorsa (tie). 0-60 mph: 4.9 seconds. Base price: $92,765. An Italian convertible propelled by a 4.2-liter, 390-hp V8 engine mated to a clutchless sequential manual transmission. The new $95,000 Maserati Quattroporte sedan, with a 0-60 time of 5.1 seconds, nearly won this category. 10) Panoz Esperante (tie). 0-60 mph: 4.9 seconds. Base price: $90,450. A family of coupés and convertibles with price tags that start in the $90,000s, Esperantes are equipped with Ford-built V8 engines. Some higher-performance Esperante models have better 0-60 mph times, but cost over $100,000.

$100,000-$250,000. 11) Ford GT. 0-60 mph: 3.3 seconds. Base price: $141,245. This 500-hp, V8 Ford can keep pace with the out-of-production, $675,000 Ferrari Enzo supercar (0-60: 3.1 seconds). Ford claims that its GT needs only 0.03 miles of road to reach 60 mph from standstill.

$250,000 and above. 12) Saleen S7 Coupé. 0-60 mph: 2.9 seconds. Base price: $440,000. The title of fastest 2004 model car goes to the California-built Saleen S7, a street-legal V8 race car whose horsepower was recently upgraded from 550 to 575. Aside from building the S7, Saleen has a partnership with Ford to customize Ford Mustang and Focus models.

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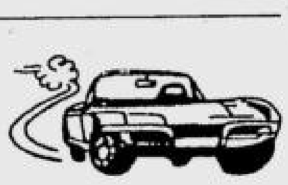
TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: Have you noticed that anyone driving slower than you is an idiot and anyone driving faster than you is a maniac?

Party time; legendary legend

FULL TANK



Al Mendoza

TRUE to its word, Toyota Motor Philippines celebrated its post-Christmas party that it aptly calls yearly as the Thanksgiving Night on Jan. 28. The shebang, held at the Captain's Bar in Mandarin, was, as usual, a big hit.

For one, the speech of Toyota president Nobuharo Tabata was again direct to the point. Mincing no words, Tabata-san was ecstatic as he proudly announced Toyota's victory anew in collaring another Triple Crown triumph in the year past; that was something for the books—a third straight Grand Slam that, at the end of his speech, a thunderous applause greeted it.

For another, Alfred Ty, now the TMP vice chair, graced the occasion in his usual "quiet" manner, doing the rounds to shake hands with Toyota's star-studded lineup of guests. It is not every day that we get to see Alfred, whose work ethic, I was told, has become as legendary as his father's.

***

Oh, well, this night of nights, where was Vince Socco, the idol of many in terms of doing things right at Toyota and the benchmark in perfection insofar as Ariel de Jesus is concerned. Stuck in faraway Singapore, where he holds fort for Toyota, manning Toyota's unquestioned leadership in the region.

Anyway, here's Danny Isla, Vince's heir apparent, with his speech that, oh well, brought the house down anew, what with his usual Beatle-tinged *obra maestra*. Isn't Vince also a Beatlemanic like Danny?

***

Here's Danny Isla's magnum opus:

"For three remarkable years now, Toyota has been honored with the Triple Crown—a distinction we are very proud about.

"You now know that the market actually experienced a decline of five percent in 2004. On the other hand, Toyota's volume actually grew by five percent, capturing a 33 percent share of the total market. You might call it luck, but Toyota's gains were a product of hard work, determination and a passion to win against every odd that came our way.

"So tonight, we celebrate our success with you. Tonight, we celebrate with the same people who continue to journey with us in our quest for greater things for the automotive industry. Tonight is our way of saying thank you for all your support and for the vote of sustained confidence in Toyota.

"Celebrate the Triple Crown with us. Raise your glasses and shout Yeah!

"Here's to Toyota—No. 1 in Passenger Cars. Yeah!

"Here's to Toyota—No. 1 in Commercial Vehicles. Yeah!

"Here's to Toyota—No. 1 in Overall Sales. Yeah!

"To you and to Toyota's Triple Crown for the third time, shout Yeah! three times: Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!"

Immediately after Danny had uttered the last "Yeah," the opening strains of the The Beatles' "She Loves You" yeah, yeah, yeah was played.

Spontaneously, the crowd applauded lustily.

Vintage Danny I. Vintage Toyota.

***

Here's a glass to Volvo for its robust participation in the recently successful staging of the second Bike for Hope, a charity event organized by the Compañero Rene Cayetano Foundation. The Volvo S60 T5 and the Volvo Safety Car led the team of around 300 bikers from all over the Philippines as they rode up to Baguio on Jan. 15 from Pangasinan.

Sen. Pia Cayetano spearheaded the event with brothers Taguig-Pateros Rep. Alan Peter, Muntinlupa Councilor Rene Carl and TV director Lino along with other corporate sponsors including Volvo.

Said Volvo's Loi Concepcion, Albert Arcilla's most trusted aide at Viking Cars: "Volvo's philosophy of protecting—and celebrating—life is a continuing process. That is why every opportunity that upholds these values is a chance to promote awareness about safety and environmental care. Bike for Hope is one venue where people are encouraged to do both by promoting a healthy lifestyle in all aspects including care for nature and its inhabitants."

Volvo has been known to be an active advocate in environmental care and protection. Its aim to be the environmental leader in the premium segment of the car industry is legendary. It has not stopped developing automotive technologies that intend to reduce emissions of harmful substances and greenhouse carbon dioxide.

Last June, Volvo took part in the worldwide campaign for road safety by distributing reflector-laden stickers and snap-on reflexes to pedestrians to increase their visibility. Records show that 1.2 million people die in road accidents every year, 88 percent of these happen in developing countries like the Philippines. Volvo has taken the lead in actively in highlighting awareness about protecting and saving life.

***

The Car of the Year Awards will be held shortly and, in light of this, may I cite the fact that the Honda Legend has won the Japan Car of the Year Award for 2004-2005 and Most Advanced Technology Award conferred by the Japan Car of the Year executive committee. Said Takeo Fukui, Honda's president and CEO: "We are extremely honored by this award, especially so that we beat a field that included both domestic and imported cars."

I wish my colleagues all the best in their inaugural Coty awards this month. May the criteria they used in selecting the winning car/s be free from unsavory remarks by the nation's discriminating car buffs.

***

QUOTE ME. The unleaded fuel is called "green gas" because it causes less pollution than the rest.

Full speed ahead for first Manila Motor Show

ALL roads lead to the World Trade Center in Pasay City on April 28-30, for the first Manila Motor Show.

Worldbex Services International (WSI), the organizer of grand expositions and events, introduces the first-of-its-kind motor show to bear the name of the country's capital.

Launch pad

"We intend to follow the likes of the North American International Auto Show, the Tokyo Motor Show and the Geneva Motor Show, which are most-attended, top-caliber motor shows that have become the launch pad for new cars and the gauge from which the best in the industry are judged," said Joseph Ang, founding chair of WSI.

In cooperation with major car manufacturers and distributors, the Manila Motor Show will showcase the new lineup of 2005 models as well as a number of special vehicles and concept cars. Topnotch products at their best values such as the latest aftermarket auto parts, accessories, electronics and gadgets, OEM supplies and related products will surely draw the crowds, too.

3-day event

The three-day event, which runs from 10 a.m. to 12 midnight, will be held in line with the 2nd World Sports and Leisure Show, also organized by WSI. As it features the best in the sports and leisure industry, including health and fitness services, sporting goods and health food from here and around the world, it is expected to be a convergence of entrepreneurs, agents, sports personalities, enthusiasts and hobbyists.

"With the full support of motoring industry key players such as Japanese, American, European, and Korean brands, expect that the Manila Motor Show will be as celebrated and as huge as other similar events," Ang added.

The Manila Motor Show will be the venue for exhibitors from the motoring industry to discuss relevant topics such as Asean market integration, next-generation environmental technologies, consumer and industry reports, and individual corporate plans for 2005.

Category winners

One of the highlights of the Manila Motor Show will be a lineup of the category winners of the Car of the Year Awards. The Car of the Year will be awarded on Feb. 24, after months of testing and voting by nearly 50 Philippine motoring journalists.

Apart from the large indoor exhibition space, the outdoor grounds will also be utilized for additional displays, test drives and various activities. Other highlights are off-road demonstrations, quarter-mile challenges and various seminars on road safety and awareness.

Numerous exhibitors have already expressed interest to take part in this year's momentous events.

For details, please call WSI at 531-6350 or 534-3615, fax 533-2026, e-mail info@worldbex.com or log on to www.worldbex.com.

The little engine that could

From page C3

in a dual capacity as both economical transportation and fun-driving toy. This made it really popular and soon the streets of Manila were to be filled with the signature "banshee wail" of a B16A driven at wide open throttle.

Though Toyota and Mitsubishi had similar high-output variable-valve timing engines at the time (the 170bhp VVTI 4AGE 20V "Black Top" and the 160bhp Mivec 4G93), very few made them to the Philippine shores and largely as surplus units. To this day, the rice rocket engine of the masses is still the B16A. Commonly found in surplus engine shops on Banawe and Evangelista streets, these often find themselves installed in all shapes, sizes and years of the Honda Civic.

Most popular shell

The most popular shell used to clothe the B16A is the EG series two-door hatchback, or *itlog*(egg) as it is lovingly called. The older of the engine series, with the cable-type transmission, find themselves in the EF hatchback, aptly designated the *plancha*(flat iron), by enthusiasts. The Montessori building block interchangeability of the various Civic chassis and Honda's available engines make for a plethora of easily executed pocket rocket projects.

As a final note, despite the remarkable performance that can be had with a B16A, it is by no means at the top of the Honda B series food chain. The Type R EK9 hatchback came equipped with a B16B, an 185bhp tweaked version of the A model that allowed it to rev to an ear-splitting 8,200 rpm.

Larger displacement units

There were also the 140bhp B18B (non-VTEC) and 170bhp B18C VTEC engines used in the larger Integra platforms of sister company Acura. These were larger displacement units at 1800cc and retained the inline four formats. The Tyrannosaurus Rex of the entire B series bunch is undoubtedly the B18C5 found in the 98-on series Integra Type R, as it spewed 210bhp up to a phenomenal 8,100 rpm. The larger B20 series found on the 1996 to 2001 CRV is more of a plant eating Brachiosaur. Though having the largest displacement in the family, it had performance numbers easily outmatched by its smaller-endowed brethren.

As technology inevitably marches on, a new hot Honda engine is on the block: the K20 iVTEC series of two-liter, inline fours. Prepared for various applications, its basic form equips the humble, current model CRV (150bhp), all the way to the blistering Acura RSX/Honda Integra Type R (220bhp). Think of the possibilities, ladies and gentlemen. Yet, tempted as I may, I'll leave the tweaking and tooling to the next generation of love struck mechanic wanna-bes.

A lot of information is available on the Internet for engine swaps, like hybrid2.honda-perf.org. A great help in any automotive surgery project of this magnitude is an appropriate shop manual and these can be ordered at www.haynes.com.

***

For comments, e-mail the author at scandyflick@yahoo.com.

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2bU!'s Valentine blowout *Part 1*

2bU! hereby declares February as Love Month. Flowers, hearts, chocolates, gifts, dinners for two. Let's face it, Valentine's Day can take a toll on our pockets. This year, we decided to wave our magic wand.

It doesn't matter if you're cash-strapped or not, we want you to join in on the fun. 2bU! and close to 50 of our big-hearted friends have been preparing special surprises for you.

In the entire month of February, we will be giving away hundreds of prizes—gift packages you can win for your loved ones, dinners and dates you can enjoy with them and the promise of fun for your single friends.

We want you to celebrate your relationships in the most beautiful and meaningful ways possible.

This week, we start by giving away progressive dinner dates at Eastwood for 15 couples. There's more to look forward to in the coming weeks, we promise you.

Because we love you, dear readers, this is our Valentine's Day gift to you.

Settle down with our pages, list down what you want to win and amaze us with your contest entries.

We'll be waiting.

Prizes are just four steps away

Here's how you can win 2bU!'s Valentine Blowout

Step 1 Read all the 2bU! issues in February and pick out which prizes you want to win.

Step 2 You have two options: You can either send us your love story or a creative expression of love (scrapbook pages, greeting cards, poems, a CD of a song you wrote, a webpage—the only limit is your imagination). Or both if you really want to.

Step 3 Include a photo of you and your loved one, your name, age, address, school/office and contact numbers.

Step 4 E-mail your entries to contest2bU@inquirer.com.ph and/or thevalentineblowout@yahoo.com or snail mail them to Philippine Daily Inquirer building Chino Roces Avenue corner Yague and Mascardo Streets Makati City.

Deadline for entries is February 28. Winners will be announced on this space. Our favorite entries will be published in a future 2bU! issue.

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0431, Series of 2005

ON CHRISTINE: Black lace corset, 22 BC. Silver ruffled skirt, to order from Tatah Galias (0916-4905306). Crystal chandelier earrings and hairpieces, Get Happy. Silver sandals, Pretty Fit

AQUA Indian print silk dress, Elizabeth Hallie Vy (0917-8362521, by appointment only.)

ON NIKKA: Baby-pink beaded gown, Chris Diaz (0918-3355096)

Little Women

ON NIKKA: Pink polka-dot corset, 22 BC. Sequined shrug and aqua skirt, Maita Fernandez (0917-5318125). Cuff by Get Happy;
On Mela: Sequined black dress by Karimadon. Hat, Bernadette Mutuc; necklace (on hat) by Get Happy. Faux pearls, stylist's own. Emerald green pumps, Pretty Fit

Text and styling
by Bianca Consunji
2bU! Correspondent
Photos by Sara Black

THERE they were, the dreaded words: "What will I wear to the prom?"

My blood froze. Nikka, my sister, was standing in front of me with the tragic expression of someone with a burning problem. Although I had always been thrilled to dress her in all sorts of outfits before, this time I was disoriented.

It took me a few minutes to remember that the prom was a standard ritual for high school kids, and yes, my 16-year-old sister was a high school junior.

She was going to the prom with a date (finding out that some dandy asked her to his prom took an additional hour for me to recover from). After several unsuccessful attempts to convince her that bulky turtlenecks were the hottest things to wear this side of prom town—hey, what if some dude tried to look down her top?—I resigned myself to the sad truth of helping my sister change from little girl to young woman.

But then again, when it comes to the prom, many high schoolers don't need any help from their elders (that would be anyone who's out of high school.) Quiet and demure girls morph into tenacious, conquer-all women with admirable battle plans laid out for their gowns and dates.

They brave the labyrinths of Kamuning in search of the perfect fabric, and, armed with magazines and yards of textile, march into the couturiers' studios with perfectly tones bodies that have not seen chocolate for weeks prior to the fitting.

Dates are snared with grace and subtlety that would put a queen to shame.

(Of course, there are those who depend on their mothers to choose for them both dress and date, with fathers to drive them to event. And you have the rare minority who aren't allowed to go to the prom, but that's another story.)

Although to many, the prom is a chance for them to show just how grown-up they could be (yeah, by wearing a gown and makeup), it also shows the contrary. Think of it this way: all those hours spent on clothes, makeup, and date show that these high school ladies are still little girls playing dress up.

But instead of decorating Barbies, they decorate themselves. Ahh, youth.

But hey, there's still no stopping overprotective parents and siblings. Really, girls, turtlenecks aren't too bad. Really.

E-mail biancaconsunji@yahoo.com

ON TANYA: Aqua dress, Karimadon. Pink sandals, Pretty Fit. Flowers from The Language of Flowers; On Mela: White corset top, Maita Fernandez (0917-5318125). Silver gown (used as skirt), Karimadon

ON MELA: White corset top, Maita Fernandez. Black-and-white skirt with petticoat, Bernadette Mutuc (0922-3857489.) Necklace and hairpiece from Get Happy

ON TANYA: Purple dress, Freeway. On Christine: pink dress, to order from Aby Puzon (0917-8586585).

Co-styled with Happy David and Abigail Puzon
Makeup by Xeng Zulueta of Shu Uemura (using the 2005 Spring/Summer Reveries mode makeup collection)
All accessories by Get Happy (0917-8106274)
Hair by Adel Ramos and Jet Brondial
from Salon de Manila and Archie Tolentino for Shu Uemura

MODELS: NIKKA CONSUNJI, CHRISTINE TAYAG, MELA ABEJA AND TANYA CAMPOS.
SHOT AT THE SCOTT RESIDENCE.
SPECIAL THANKS TO GIL AND ROSE SCOTT, TINA TINIO, RITA CABRERA OF ELITE GARMENTS, AND ERICA ILICAO OF TIGI BED HEAD
SHU UEMURA AT RUSTAN'S MAKATI AND EDSA SHANGRI-LA. PRETTY FIT, GLORIETTA 3, MAKATI. LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS, 327 OLALIA BUILDING, KATIPUNAN, 9294571
SALON DE MANILA BRANCHES: BANAWE- 7126693; LEGASPI- 8931309; KATIPUNAN- 9135637; SALCEDO- 8875758, MORATO- 3799510; ALABANG- 8078030

ON NIKKA: Apple-green corset and skirt, Maita Fernandez. Pink sash, Karimadon. Rose necklace and pearl tiara, Get Happy. Pink jeweled sandals, Pretty Fit

DENIM and lace dress and purple tulle skirt, to order from Aby Puzon. Baby pink pumps, Pretty Fit

Prom-pretty looks

Text by Bianca Consunji, 2bU! Correspondent
Photos by Sara Black

Meg

Your look is: Glamorous, a little vain and ladylike

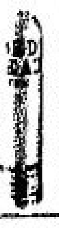
Nothing spells "woman" more than lipstick. Avoid looking like you swiped your mom's makeup by going for softer, natural shades with a hint of shine. Twist up your hair in a sophisticated updo and rub a little serum for a glossy finish.

Try: Shu Uemura Lolishine Rouge lipstick; Bed Head Girl Toys shine serum

Jo

Your look is: Boyish, carefree, not fussy at all

Be practical with multitasking pencils that you can tote around everywhere—the matte side helps intensify any color you put over it, while the pearlized end adds a luminescent finish. Apply a bit of mousse on your hair—you want natural, but not unruly.



Try: Shu Uemura eye pencils in blue and pink; Bed Head Control Freak straightening mousse

Beth

Your look is: Sweet and demure, soft and pretty

Don't go too strong on the makeup. Focus on blush and lip gloss to keep your look sweet and soft. Curl your hair for an 1800s romantic feel, and accessorize with fresh flowers and beads on your hair.

Try: Shu Uemura Lipgloss in Pink Lemonade and Orange Sorbet; Bed Head Uptight curl maker

Amy

Your look is: Artistic, experimental, and a bit unconventional

Play around with eye shadows to see the different looks you can create—don't be afraid to mix and match colors (ignore the neighborhood makeup artist when he insists on earth tones). Finish off your look with loose, flowing curls.

Try: Shu Uemura Reveries eye shadows; Bed Head Creative Genius sculpting liquid

A WHITE rose from Designer Blooms to set the mood for the evening

APERITIFS at Ebisu Grill breed preliminary conversations.

A WHIMSICAL carousel ride makes for spontaneity.

2bU!'s unique Valentine treat

Text by Cheryl Tiu
2bU! Correspondent
Photos by Raffy Lerma

TO CELEBRATE the month of hearts, 2bU! will play Cupid and give you the perfect Valentine's Day gift. Extemporizing on the classic sit-down dinner, 15 lucky readers and their loved ones will get the chance to go on an exclusive progressive dinner date at Eastwood.

Designer Blooms will be furnishing flowers to set the mood for the night. The evening will then start with aperitifs at Ebisu Grill for you to warm up to one another.

You can then carry your conversations over main course at Jack's Loft. After dinner, stop by Nuts About Candy for some candy loot bags before heading over to the Eastwood Cinemas to cuddle up for a movie.

To cap the night, walk over to Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf for a gratifying quality time over dessert and coffee.

It will be an evening that deviates from the ordinary, but it will most certainly be the perfect way for you and your loved one to spend the most romantic day of the year.

For details on how to join, turn to page D-1.

E-mail the author at chloe_dominique@yahoo.com

Eugene Tan is the vice president of China Star. He is a young restaurateur, considered the guardian of time-honored Chinese culinary tradition, which advocates new vintage Chinese cuisine.

SHOT ON LOCATION AT EASTWOOD, LIBIS

Here's a treat for singles

LOVE is in the air as Eastwood City rolls out the red carpet for all singles, ages 19-30. From Jan. 18 to Feb. 25, 2005, all purchases or food receipts at any Eastwood City establishments, including Cyber Mall, Eastwood Cinemas, City Walk 1 & 2; and Style Centrale entitles the customer to fill up a joining form. All forms will be reviewed, and 10 lucky participants (5 male and 5 female) will be chosen. Each of the 10 participants will bring one single friend to the "singles night-out party" on Valentine's Day at Eastwood City. The 10 pairs will be treated to a whirlwind "dream Eastwood City date." Sign up and you might be one of the lucky 10 single people that will treated to a fun-filled Valentine's, plus a chance for a pair to win P10,000 in cash.

THE TALK becomes more engaging over the main course at Jack's Loft.

NUTS About Candy can pacify your sugar cravings.

A MOVIE awaits at the Eastwood Cinema.

COFFEE and dessert at Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf is a gratifying way to cap the night.

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Forward to 85
84

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•April 26, 2005
•June 23, 2005
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See flyers for details
Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 5984, Series of 2004.

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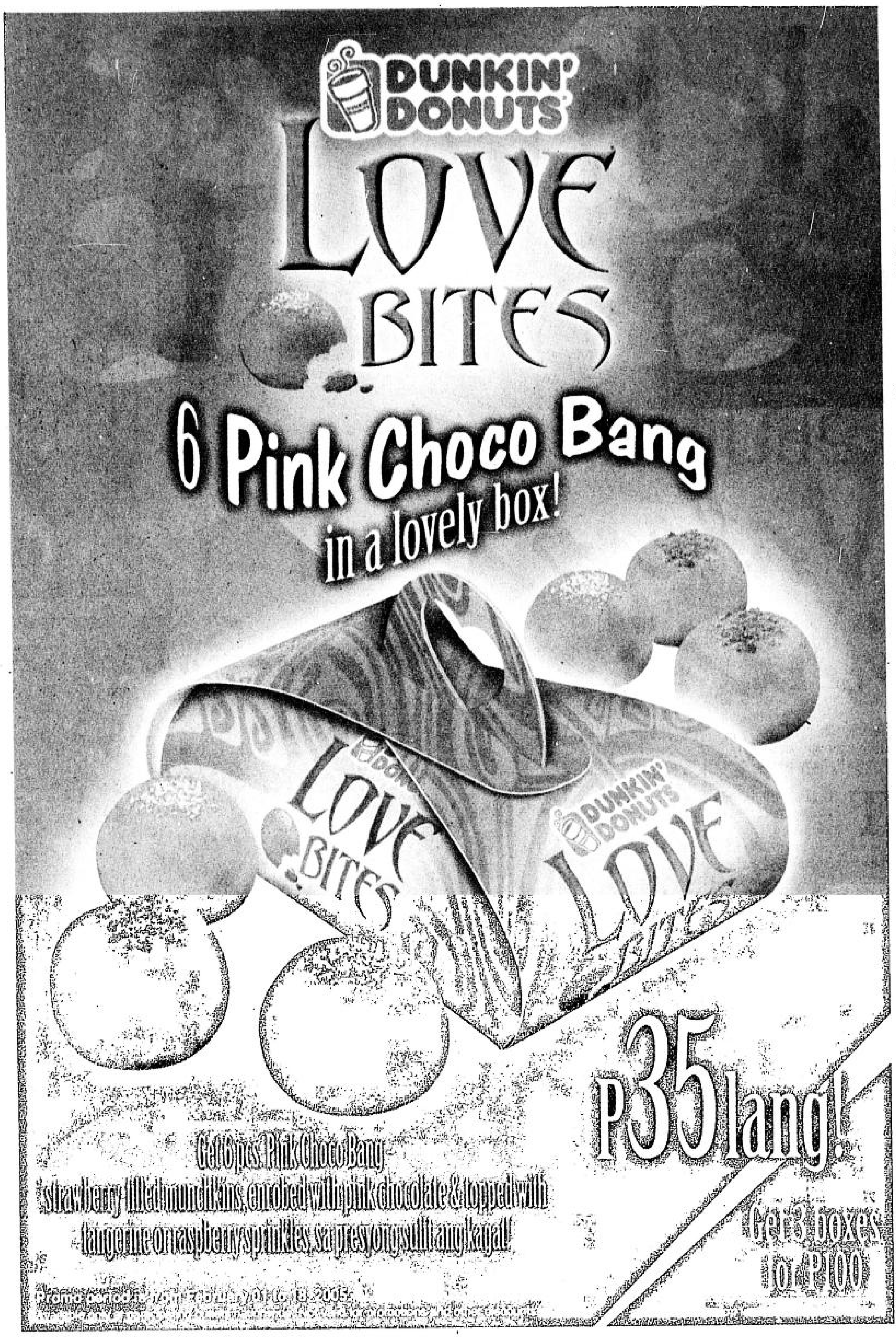
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I am now committed!

Yapparazzi!

Tim Yap

SAME time last year, **Pam Pastor** and I made a pact—that the next 365 days ahead of us would be the year of commitment.

Another year and a month has passed and I find myself still in the same desk, rushing my article to beat the deadline (which I'm not so good at) while Pam sits comfortably, sifting through paperwork while looking at her screen saver, an artful collage of her and her boyfriend, **Arvin de Guzman**, who also happens to be right beside her as we speak.

No, I am not bitter. It is never productive to be bitter. Even when I was backstage at the INQUIRER-produced bridal show last week at the NBC Tent, I happily applauded my model friends who walked down the ramp as if it was their real wedding.

It became a dress rehearsal for soon-to-be-bride **G Tongi** and fiancé **Tim Walters**, who are tying the knot this month in Boracay. The glow coming from the couple was so palpable I hugged them for sheer excitement. I wanted to get a priest right then and there to give them their blessings. "I knew it was you," their eyes seemed to tell each other.

What do basketball and love have in common? Despite the popular vote, the Talk 'N Texters won by a huge margin, because they focused on making the team better

Leap of faith and love

A couple of weeks back, I hosted a dinner for **Stephanie Zubiri**, **Alex Escat** and **KC Concepcion** at my new resto, Embassy. The girls excitedly shared all the developments in their respective love lives (as they all love to do—how very "Sex and the City").

Steph was excited about her French boyfriend who was coming to town. "If he asks me to marry him, I will!" she announced. Alex told us about the joys of her Spanish steady, while KC—uh, let's keep her love life confidential.

A week later, during Steph's *despedida* (again at Embassy), **Victor**, her French boyfriend, announced that Steph was the girl he wanted to be with forever. While most girls her age would be skeptical about such a thing, I admire Steph for deciding to take the plunge.

In a way, her leap of faith (and love) is something so fresh and totally unjaded by the heartaches of this world.

"We make each other happy, and we make sure we make each other better. What more can a woman ask for?" said Steph, her eyes twinkling.

Singles, unite!

These are all inspiring tales of people finding each other. For the majority of the world that is single, there's itzamatch.com—a website that links singles and organizes group dates for singles who want to shed off singlehood.

In the words of the Shakespearean poet of today, **Carrie Bradshaw**, "If you are single, after graduation, there isn't one occasion where people celebrate you... Hallmark doesn't make a, 'Congratulations, you didn't marry the wrong guy' card." The group behind itzamatch.com gives singles a reason to celebrate being "alone but not lonely."

Even Libis conglomerate Eastwood is throwing a party for singles this Valentine month. They are going to treat 10 couples (or 20 singles) to a group date around their compound and treat them the Eastwood royal way this Valentine's.

All these efforts are to show the world that the single person is not *kawawa* (unless one feels it).

An unforgettable episode of "Oprah" featured a woman who had just been dumped by her fiancé very close to the wedding date. Instead of sobbing and wallowing in misery, she sent out cards with the inscription, "Chose the wrong guy, gave him the wrong finger."

(My sister **Michelle** just broke off her engagement, but she did it nine months before the date. She is now happily single—and relieved that she made that decision.)

Balls to commit

Just last night I watched the first leg of the PBA finals. It was Ginebra vs Talk 'N Text. The whole Araneta Coliseum seemed to favor Ginebra, booing every move that ace player **Asi Taulava** made on the hard court. We in the yellow-clad Talk 'N Text crowd (**Manny Pangilinan**, **Kris Aquino** and **Boy Abunda** were among the staunchest supporters) were a quiet minority in the jampacked coliseum.

Despite it all, I saw how the team pulled it off. Every time coach **Joel Banal** called to meet with his players, I saw how intense they were in their game, listening to their coach give his pointers on how to make the game better and ignoring the jeers of the audience.

So what do basketball and relationships have in common? Despite the popular vote, the Talk 'N Texters won by a huge margin, because they focused on themselves to make the team better. Self is the operative word here. Commitment is the tool.

Commitment to self. Commitment to career. Commitment to your beliefs. Commitment to your family. The list goes on.

Commitment is not just about giving yourself to somebody. It's quite basic and goes back to the fundamentals—to yourself.

But it takes effort and focus. Like planting seeds and waiting for it to grow, it needs constant attention and nurturing to make sure the roots are firmly planted and it grows upright, towards the direction of the sun.

This month of hearts, let us look deep down and touch base with our relationship to Commitment.

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Cristina Gonzalez-Romualdez:
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Love, hope and devotion in the time of war

REVIEW

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit
Contributor

IF YOU'RE hankering for a different date movie for this so-called love month, look no further. "A Very Long Engagement" brings back the heart and soul of the French wonderfilm "Amelie"—director Jean-Pierre Jeunet and actress Audrey Tautou—in a tale that celebrates hope, perseverance and undying devotion, even while it's set in the bleak aftermath of World War I.

Mathilde (Tautou) and Manech (Gaspard Ulliel) have been friends since childhood. She is afflicted with polio; he was the only person who showed interest in her. The relationship blossoms in their teenage years, and they believe the deep mutual attraction entitles them to a happy ending.

Their love is put to the test when the war erupts and they are separated. Manech must serve his country, and Mathilde has no choice but to wait for his return. They hold on to an optimism that only young lovers can know: They will survive this; they cannot, and will not, think otherwise.

Preferred reality

But war brings about the unimaginable. Horrid conditions make Manech snap almost immediately. The once-enthusiastic soldier wants out, and he becomes desperate enough to cause himself physical harm. He deliberately lets the enemy shoot his hand.

No, this act isn't without dire consequences. The penalty for soldiers who commit self-mutilation, shockingly enough, is death. Manech and four other comrades similarly condemned are left out to die in the crossfire between the warring trenches—their own, France's and Germany's.

Mathilde refuses to digest the tragedy, and conducts her own investigation of Manech's fate. Her fiancé couldn't have perished; she would have received certain signs if he had. She lets scenarios play out that would affirm her superstitions. For example, if her pet dog comes into the room before a designated time, Manech will return. Or, if she outraces a car using a shortcut, she'll see Manech again. With only these and fierce love fueling her faith, Mathilde searches for the reality she prefers, based on the hope that her beloved has miraculously survived.

Distinctive look

"A Very Long Engagement" is at once feel-good and weepy, capably fleshing out a story that underscores optimism against a dreary and engulfing backdrop. It pushes pretty much the same emotional buttons that last year's romance-steeped war epic, "Cold Mountain," did. On the other hand, it employs more unconventional storytelling techniques and sports a smoother, more unified visual identity.

LOVE is put to the test when war erupts and Tautou (above) and her boyfriend (Ulliel, left), who believe in a happy ending, are separated

Based on a novel by the late Sebastien Japrisot, "A Very Long Engagement" is rewritten for the screen by Jeunet and Guillaume Laurant. A vividly presented but chromatically muted imagery gives the tale its distinctive, olden-era look. A sizeable portion of the movie is told in detailed flashbacks, which expose layers upon layers of the same events as seen through different sets of eyes.

Tautou and Jeunet's previous collaboration on "Amelie" is said to have allowed for an easier and more comfortable working experience for both. What's evident to the viewers is the smooth meshing of Tautou's character with the tale. We see Mathilde as an iden-

LOVE/ 3

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ABS-CBN, GMA shows dominate USTV Awards

MEL Tiangco, Best Female News Anchor. At left is Dean Rosalinda Solevilla, College of Pharmacy

BOY Abunda for "The Buzz," Best Talk Show. Behind him is Dr. Raul Sunico, dean of the Conservatory of Music

PROGRAMS from the rival networks, ABS-CBN 2 and GMA 7, dominated the first USTV Awards given by the University of Santo Tomas, Asia's oldest university.

But while the two networks were evenly matched in the individual categories—they won five awards each—GMA won the best television station award.

The colorful awards ceremonies at the UST Medicine Auditorium drew network executives and talents from the major networks, including ABC-5, IBC-13 and RPN 9.

The nominees were drawn from a poll of the 30,000-strong UST student body. A multipartite panel composed of representatives from the administration, students and faculty chose the awardees. Also taking part in the judging was Margarita "Tingting" Cojuangco, who represented the alumni.

The nominees were judged based on several criteria, including whether they reflected Christian values and the "Thomasian vision of truth with charity."

Apparently taking note of criticism that the nominees were very commercial, UST Rector Fr. Tamerlane Lana, O.P., said the winners "do not necessarily reflect Christian values." He explained the awards would guide UST in the media formation of its students.

Fr. Lana then urged broadcast networks to reflect Christian values in their programming.

UST secretary general and USTV chair Fr. Isidro Abaño, O.P., said the awards really sought to increase the students' awareness of the power of the media to influ-

ABS-CBN/ 3

FR. TAMERLANE Lana, O.P., Rector Magnificus

FR. ISIDRO Abano, O.P., secretary general and USTV Awards chair

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MTRCB RATING: R13

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Subject to MTRCB RATING

SHALL WE DANCE?
MTRCB RATING: GP13

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5 RACING STRIPES
6 WITHOUT A PADDLE
7 KUNG FU HUSTLE
8 OCEAN'S TWELVE
9 MEET THE FOCKERS
10 ELEKTRA
11 BLADE TRINITY
12 WHITE NOISE

sm city fairview
1 SALSA (AN SM CINEMA EXCLUSIVE)
2 KUNG FU HUSTLE
3 BLADE TRINITY
4 ELEKTRA
5 MEET THE FOCKERS
6 ASSAULT IN PRECINCT 13
7 SHALL WE DANCE
8 RACING STRIPES
9 A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
10 MAD HOUSE
11 OCEAN'S TWELVE
12 IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE

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2 KUNG FU HUSTLE
3 A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
4 SHALL WE DANCE
5 RACING STRIPES
6 ELEKTRA
7 WITHOUT A PADDLE
8 BLADE TRINITY
9 MEET THE FOCKERS
10 WHITE NOISE
11 LITTLE BLACK BOOK (AN SM CINEMA EXCLUSIVE)
12 MAD HOUSE

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2 SHALL WE DANCE
3 ELEKTRA
4 WHITE NOISE
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7 RACING STRIPES
8 KUNG FU HUSTLE
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10 IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE

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5 BLADE TRINITY
6 OCEAN'S TWELVE
7 KUNG FU HUSTLE
8 ELEKTRA
9 MEET THE FOCKERS
10 SALSA (AN SM CINEMA EXCLUSIVE)

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3 WITHOUT A PADDLE
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7 SHALL WE DANCE
8 ASSAULT IN PRECINCT 13

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3 RESERVED
4 RESERVED

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MTRCB Rating: PG13

TODAY
SM SOUTHMALL • SM FAIRVIEW

LITTLE BLACK BOOK

Stacy Holt (Brittany Murphy), an associate producer for daytime talk show hostess Kippie Kann (Kathy Bates), is frustrated when her boyfriend Derek (Ron Livingston) refuses to discuss his past relationships. With the encouragement of her co-worker Barb (Holly Hunter), she delves into his Palm to learn about his ex-girlfriends. Using the show as a ruse, Stacy interviews and befriends them, only to discover that the past, in a few instances, is rather present.

Subject to MTRCB RATING

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4 (DTS)

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2 (SDDS) ELEKTRA
3 (DTS) MEET THE FOCKERS
4 GOLD (DTS) ELEKTRA
5 GOLD (DOLBY) A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
6 GOLD (SDDS) SHALL WE DANCE
7 GOLD (DOLBY) ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13
8 (AMX) KUNG FU HUSTLE
9 (AMX) ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13
10 (AMX) BLADE TRINITY

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ABS-CBN, GMA dominate . . .

From page 2

ence society.

The winners:

Best television station—GMA 7

Best news program—"24 Oras" (GMA)

Best female news anchor—Mel Tiangco (GMA)

Best male news anchor—Arnold Clavio (GMA)

Best documentary program—"I-Witness" (GMA)

Best comedy program—"Bubble Gang" (GMA)

Best lifestyle program—"F"

Best talk show—"The Buzz" (ABS-CBN)

Best talk show host, female—Kris Aquino (ABS-CBN)

Best talk show, male—Boy Abunda (ABS-CBN)

Best drama program—"Maalaala Mo Kaya" (ABS-CBN)

Best music video—"Masaya" by Bamboo

HOWIE Severino for "I-Witness," Best Documentary Program

ARNOLD Clavio, Best Male News Anchor

THE UST Singers

Love, hope . . .

From page 1

tifiable character whose many sides—the relentless fiancée, the lovable stepdaughter, the sensuous lover—are developed with quiet finesse.

Her elfin good looks and quiet charm work up a nice chemistry with screen lover Ulliel, whose similarly distinct features and boyish charisma make Manech a presence that translates well on the screen.

Thought-provoking

A bunch of minor players add touches of quirkiness. Attention to seemingly unimportant characters was a great part of what made "Amelie" very engaging, and it works just as well here. Whether it's the kindly army cook, the bike-riding postman or the market merchant (played by Jodie Foster), we feel a bigger overall connection that add depth to the tale of Mathilde and Manech.

Jeunet's cinematic language keeps the viewers interested, even if some scenes seem prolonged and allow little room for imagination. In fact, "A Very Long Engagement" makes use of every scene carefully, to illustrate a bigger picture that's thought-provoking, yet easy to comprehend.

Best of all, it's a timeless and solid film that anyone can appreciate, with or without a date. It makes us examine our own relationships, which is the definitive sign of a good movie, mush-based or not.

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1 A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
11:55, 2:45, 5:35, 8:25, 11:10
R-13

2 SHALL WE DANCE
10:45, 1:05, 3:35
6:05, 8:35, 11:00
PG-13

3 ELEKTRA
10:40, 1:05, 3:35
6:15, 8:45, 11:00
PG-13

4 ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13
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SHALL WE DANCE? GP

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4 Elektra
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2 Ang galing galing mo Babes
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FS 12:00PM, 2:30PM, 5:00PM, 7:30PM, LMF 10:00PM (GP)
② RACING STRIPES
(SUBJECT TO MTRCB RATING)
③ ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13
(SUBJECT TO MTRCB RATING)
④ A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
FS 10:40AM, 1:30PM, 4:20PM, 7:10PM, LMF 10:00PM (R-13)
PREMIERE THEATRE ELEKTRA
FS 12:00PM, 2:30PM, 5:00PM, 7:30PM, LMF 10:00PM (PG-13)
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8 BATH HOUSE
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March 02 - 08 IMUS
March 09 - 15 LIPA
March 16 - 22 PIONEER
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MTRCB Rating: R-18

PIONEER 687-5378
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4 ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13

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CELEBRITY TRIAL OF THE CENTURY

'I will be acquitted, vindicated'

SANTA Maria, California—Just hours before he goes on trial in California, pop superstar Michael Jackson said Sunday "disgusting" claims of child molestation made his life "a nightmare," but insisted he would be found innocent.

"I will be acquitted and vindicated when the truth is told," he said in a videotaped statement broadcast on his website just before the scheduled start of what has been dubbed the celebrity trial of the century.

The trial was to start yesterday in the small central Californian city of Santa Maria, 50 km from Jackson's sprawling Neverland home and amusement park where he is alleged to have sexually molested a cancer-stricken 13-year-old boy two years ago.

One of the world's best known entertainers, Jackson, 46, will see for the first time some of the people who will be given the power to put him behind bars, as the court starts the lengthy process of selecting 12 jurors from a list of 4,000 potential candidates.

Jackson angrily dismissed accusations leaked from grand jury sessions in which his now 15-year-old accuser told in graphic detail how the controversial star allegedly fondled him and plied him with alcohol.

'Ugly, malicious'

"In the last few weeks, a large amount of ugly, malicious information has been released into the media about me," Jackson said in the brief videotaped statement.

"Apparently, this information was leaked through transcripts in a grand jury proceeding where neither my lawyers, nor I, ever appeared. The information is disgusting and false," said Jackson, who was pictured wearing a bright blue shirt.

JACKSON. "When the truth is told"

Jackson said he had wanted to help the cancer-stricken boy when he invited him and his family to Neverland.

"I allowed this family into my home because they told me their son was ill with cancer and needed my help. Through the years, I have helped thousands of children who were ill or in distress."

A father of three, Jackson said the "events have caused a nightmare for my family, my children and me. I never intend to place myself in so vulnerable a position again."

He also pleaded for fairness.

"I love my community and I have great faith in our justice system. Please keep an open mind and let me have my day in court. I deserve a fair trial like every other American citizen."

Jackson has pleaded innocent, and claims the accusations are "a big lie" concocted by a greedy family.

The case has drawn worldwide attention because of the superstar status of the defendant, known for his catchy tunes, "Moonwalk" steps and signature crotch-grabbing, but also for his eccentric behavior and frequent plastic surgery.

Megabucks

He had already been accused of child molestation in 1993, but settled the case out of court in a multimillion-dollar deal.

His hard-core fans are convinced the "King of Pop" could not harm a child, and point out he is like a child himself—his Neverland ranch is named after the fictional magical kingdom of Peter Pan, the storybook boy who would not grow up.

A small group of fans sat in their cars outside the gates of Neverland Sunday, saying they wanted to show their love and support for the embattled star.

One car had the word "INNOCENT" written on its side.

"Michael has nothing to hide because nothing happened," said Wiedjai Sewgobind, 39, who traveled from Amsterdam to show his support.

The fans plan to stand outside the Santa Maria courtroom during the trial.

Last year, Jackson delighted supporters by dancing briefly atop his car after arriving 20 minutes late for his arraignment.

But tough-talking Judge Rodney Melville made it clear he would brook no such nonsense this time around, and has also warned lawyers to behave as the eyes of the world would be on his courtroom. *AFP*

'Hide and Seek' shows up on top of box office

LOS ANGELES—Robert De Niro's fright flick "Hide and Seek" had a strong debut in its opening weekend, taking in $22 million to become the top movie and fending off a rush of Academy Awards contenders.

The previous weekend's No. 1 movie, Ice Cube's road-trip comedy, "Are We There Yet?", slipped to second place with $17 million, lifting its 10-day total to $39.1 million, according to studio estimates Sunday.

Director Clint Eastwood's "Million Dollar Baby" led Oscar hopefuls with $11.8 million, coming in at No. 3 during its first weekend of wide release and raising its total domestic gross to $21.1 million.

"Million Dollar Baby" is in a neck-and-neck race for Best Picture and Best Director at the Oscars with Martin Scorsese's "The Aviator," which was No. 6 for the weekend with $7.5 million, pushing its total to $68.2 million.

"Hide and Seek" received harsh reviews, but like many other fright films, it drew the faithful horror crowd, which is rarely dissuaded by critics if a movie looks like it has some decent scares.

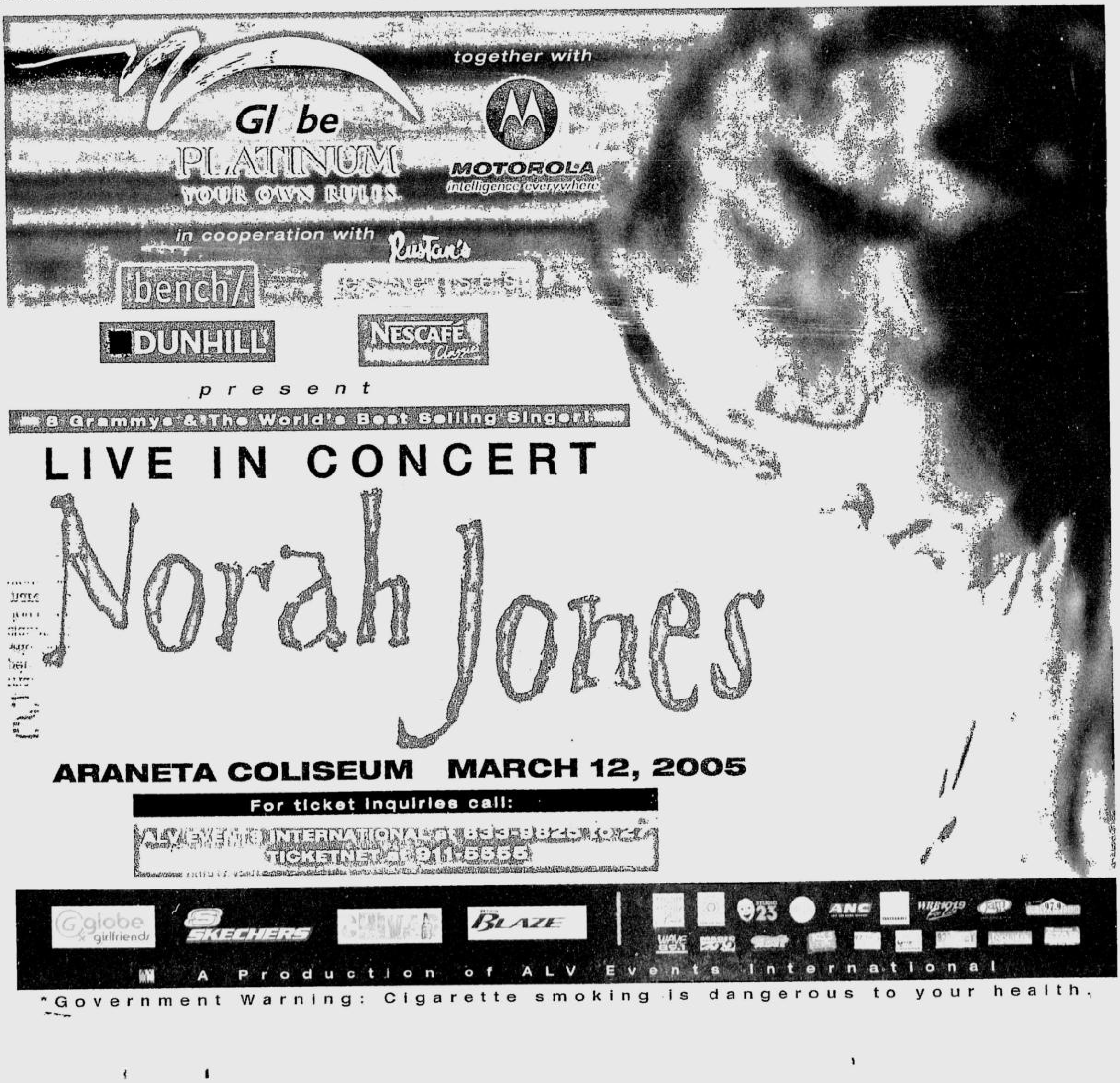
Horror films often nosedive in their second weekend, but De Niro's presence could give "Hide and Seek" more staying power, said Bruce Snyder, head of distribution for 20th Century Fox, which released the movie.

De Niro plays a father in the film coping with the potentially murderous "imaginary friend" of his daughter, played by Dakota Fanning.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at North American theaters, according to Exhibitor Relations Co. Inc.:

1) "Hide and Seek"—$22 million
2) "Are We There Yet?"—$17 million
3) "Million Dollar Baby"—$11.8 million
4) "Coach Carter"—$8 million
5) "Meet the Fockers"—$7.6 million
6) "The Aviator"—$7.5 million
7) "Sideways"—$6.3 million
8) "In Good Company"—$6.2 million
9) "Racing Stripes"—$6 million
10) "Assault on Precinct 13"—$4.2 million

AP



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